

***BUILDING LOCAL  
GOVERNMENT CAPACITY FOR  
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT:***

A Survey of the Field of Practice in Oregon

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report investigates the ways that local governments build their capacity for community engagement. It begins with a conceptual analysis of the components of community engagement capacity, describing the characteristics of robust programs, highlighting the skills required to be effective, and proposing a spectrum of institutional capacity. It explores the paths that local governments take to build their capacity, including sources of outside support such as education, training, consultation, and peer networks.

We then turn our attention to Oregon, identifying service providers in the categories described in the conceptual section. It is not an exhaustive list but is the start of a descriptive database of organizations that offer support to local governments. We also highlight examples of community engagement that we discovered through interviews with more than thirty government staff, elected officials, and practitioners.

Our key findings include:

- Local governments in all parts of Oregon do outstanding work to engage their communities.
- There is a desire among local governments for more support around community engagement.
- Detailed and comparable case studies should be prioritized for future research because they are a preferred source of learning to identify effective strategies, techniques, and best practices.
- Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) is central to community engagement.
- Local governments benefit from bringing more voices into the public process.
- Community engagement is an evolving field of practice, and local governments face emerging challenges often propelled by changing demographics.
- Local governments in Oregon have diverse needs, so it is critical that any training or consultation be carefully tailored to the circumstances of each jurisdiction.
- While valuable where available, formal training is not necessarily the primary means of capacity building for local governments. Rather, it is more common for government officials to build their skills and capacity through peer sharing, mentoring, conferences, professional networks, community relationships, lived experience, and other sources of learning and support.
- Consistent leadership support and resource investment are essential to building and sustaining capacity for community engagement.
- There are opportunities for partnerships between rural governments and public universities.
- State and federal governments are potentially valuable sources of support to local governments.

We conclude with recommendations based on our findings, offered to those working in the field in general but focused on the potential contributions of the Center for Public Service through resource development, training, consultation, convening, and advocacy.

The report has three appendices: a comparative framework for analyzing community engagement, an empirical survey of course offerings and degree programs in Oregon related to community engagement, and a description of some of the consultants and online service providers we heard about.

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## INTRODUCTION

In February 2020, the Center for Public Service (CPS) at Portland State University (PSU) brought together a group of faculty and community partners to consider collaborating with Pepperdine University's [Davenport Institute for Public Engagement and Civic Leadership](#). The Davenport Institute promotes broad-based community engagement by local governments in California, offering education, training, and consultation to city staff and elected officials.<sup>1</sup> The purpose of the meeting at PSU was to explore a similar role for CPS in Oregon, beginning with a half-day workshop with Davenport staff to understand their curriculum and approach to training.

Three themes emerged from the conversation: first, local governments in Oregon would likely benefit from training and support to help them engage their communities; second, there are researchers and practitioners in Oregon (some of them at PSU) who are already doing this work; and third, a description and classification of existing work in the field would be a valuable step in creating any sort of supportive program through CPS.

We started with a simple question: Where are local governments in Oregon getting training for community engagement? After talking with local government representatives and community engagement practitioners, we expanded the scope of the study to include other forms of support to government beyond formal training.

The project has several goals:

- Highlight efforts by local governments in Oregon to strengthen their capacity for community engagement.
- Discover the pathways and mechanisms by which local government staff and elected officials acquire the skills to do community engagement.
- Increase awareness of education, training, and support that is available to them.
- Identify organizations throughout the state that provide services to help local governments build their capacity; and
- Learn what kind of additional support local governments need and want.

We hope this report will contribute to the field both conceptually and empirically by describing the components of capacity building, discussing the paths that local governments pursue to strengthen their capacity, identifying providers of support in Oregon, and highlighting examples of efforts in specific jurisdictions.

The report places Oregon within a larger comparative context. Intentional efforts to strengthen government capacity for community engagement occur worldwide. Over the past two decades, a growing field of study and practice has sought to describe and categorize these efforts, and to understand the factors that make them successful. Appendix 1 reviews the literature and key concepts associated with this work.

We also position the subject of our study in relation to the larger issue of equity, which we consider to be the defining feature of legitimate community engagement. Equity is the broader category, encompassing all aspects of how government does its work: legal requirements, organizational

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<sup>1</sup> The Davenport Institute program is described in more detail below.

culture, policies and programs, daily operations, and external support from consultants and trainers. Community engagement is one channel to pursue equity in government. Processes to engage the community should be equitable and inclusive, and the evaluation of government efforts should take account of whether these processes lead to equitable outcomes.

This project is exploratory. It points to future research and collaborative work. The more we learned, the more we appreciated the many ways that organizations and individuals see community engagement as vital to local governance. For each person we interviewed, we were referred to others. For each jurisdiction we studied, we heard about more.

In the spirit of exploration, this is not an exhaustive study of community engagement by local governments in Oregon. Instead, we offer it as a milepost to describe and advance a coherent field of practice that is not always recognized as such by those who are working locally. We want to acknowledge innovative work in communities, large and small, and provide a point of reference for further research and practice.

This project was supported by a grant from the Mark O. Hatfield Public Service Grant Program. The report is part of a larger initiative at PSU that includes the Center for Public Service, the National Policy Consensus Center (NPCC), and the Department of Public Administration to enhance the engagement capacity of state and local agencies and community organizations.

## Project Rationale

### *WHY DOES COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT MATTER?*

There is a principled case and a practical case.

A **principled case** for engagement stresses the essential role of public participation in a democratic society. Community members deserve to be involved in the decisions that affect them. Depending on the jurisdiction and issue, they might also have a legal right to participate in decision making in specific ways. Aside from legal requirements, the government obligation to engage the public in decision making can be justified as ethical and right, and it is required by various professional codes of ethics,

including those of the [American Institute of Certified Planners \(AICP\)](#)<sup>2</sup> and the [International City/County Management Association \(ICMA\)](#).<sup>3</sup>

Many values are widely cited as measures of legitimate and meaningful public engagement, including equity, transparency, accountability, and early involvement before decisions are made (discussed below and in Appendix 1).

A **practical case** for community engagement is grounded in the tangible benefits of involving people in decisions that affect them and avoiding the pitfalls of failing to do so. From the standpoint of government staff and elected officials, the most compelling argument may be that effective community engagement can help them solve problems.<sup>4</sup>

While it requires an initial commitment of time and resources, an investment in community engagement capacity can benefit government decision makers and staff. It improves relationships and civil discourse, makes public meetings go more smoothly, saves time and money by averting legal challenges, aids project delivery when stakeholders feel heard, and improves the work environment for elected officials and staff members who are the first point of contact with the public.

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<sup>2</sup> The AICP “provides the only nationwide, independent verification of planners’ qualifications” and considers its Code of Ethics to be its “superpower.” The first principle: “Our Overall Responsibility to the Public.” Subpoints include: “(d) We shall provide timely, adequate, clear, and accurate information on planning issues to all affected persons and to governmental decision makers; (e) We shall give people the opportunity to have a meaningful impact on the development of plans and programs that may affect them. Participation should be broad enough to include those who lack formal organization or influence; (f) We shall seek social justice by working to expand choice and opportunity for all persons, recognizing a special responsibility to plan for the needs of the disadvantaged and to promote racial and economic integration. We shall urge the alteration of policies, institutions, and decisions that oppose such needs.” The third principle is “Our Responsibility to Our Profession and Colleagues,” which includes, “making work relevant to solutions of community problems, and increasing public understanding of planning activities.” Subpoints: “(b) We shall educate the public about planning issues and their relevance to our everyday lives; (f) We shall contribute time and resources to the professional development of students, interns, beginning professionals, and other colleagues; (g) We shall increase the opportunities for members of underrepresented groups to become professional planners and help them advance in the profession. The AICP [updated its Code of Ethics](#) in January 2022. The American Planning Association offers a [guide to ethical conduct](#) for professional planners in the U.S. based on the AICP Code.

<sup>3</sup> The ICMA Code of Ethics describes the role of professional management in “democratic local government.” Tenet 4: “Serve the best interest of the people.” Two guidelines to express this tenet: (1) “Impacts of Decisions. Members should inform their governing body of the anticipated effects of a decision on people in their jurisdictions, especially if specific groups may be disproportionately harmed or helped.” (2) “Inclusion. To ensure that all the people within their jurisdiction have the ability to actively engage with their local government, members should strive to eliminate barriers to public involvement in decisions, programs, and services.” Tenet 9: “Keep the community informed on local government affairs; encourage communication between the citizens and all local government officers; emphasize friendly and courteous service to the public; and seek to improve the quality and image of public service.”

<sup>4</sup> This can create a positive feedback loop. From the standpoint of community members, their participation is worth the effort because the government is listening to them, and the priorities of local leaders align with community priorities. This enhances the legitimacy of governing bodies and reinforces the idea that it is worth the time and effort to engage in government processes.

The practical case for community engagement can be expressed in many ways:<sup>5</sup>

### ***DECISION PROCESSES***

- Encourages civil and respectful communication at public meetings
- Reinforces the credibility and legitimacy of government decisions
- Gives elected leaders confidence in the basis for their decisions
- Helps to explain and justify decisions if they are challenged
- Reduces the chance of “blowback” or full-blown crisis

### ***DECISION OUTCOMES***

Results in better, creative decisions by incorporating community knowledge

- Avoids unintended consequences by identifying pitfalls early in the process
- Provides community-level information to validate data-driven decisions
- Identifies partners who can help facilitate project implementation
- Makes decisions more durable and sustainable (more “buy in”)

### ***RELATIONSHIPS***

- Promotes mutual respect and constructive (“adult-adult”) conversations
- Improves government officials’ understanding of their communities
- Treats community members and resources as part of the solution
- Builds the credibility and confidence of agency staff
- Fosters public trust in government

### ***PROJECT DELIVERY AND COST***

- Supports faster implementation in the long run (“go slow to go fast”)
- Avoids expensive course corrections by getting it right the first time
- Increases understanding of the agency’s work and funding needs
- Prevents damaged relationships from impacting other projects
- Inspires public-private collaboration to solve problems

### ***COMMUNITY BENEFITS***

- Inclusive processes make decisions more responsive to community needs

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<sup>5</sup> These examples of how to express the practical value of community engagement are drawn from the authors’ professional experience and multiple sources, including: Oregon Department of Land Conservation and Development ([Putting the People in Planning](#)), City of Portland ([Public Involvement Principles](#)), Nabatchi and Leighninger ([Public Participation for 21st Century Democracies](#)), National League of Cities (Changing the Way We Govern PDF), Davenport Institute ([workshops](#)), and International Association for Public Participation (workshops and [Core Values](#)).

- Equitable processes result in more equitable outcomes for the community
- Resources are focused on those who have not been engaged in the past
- Participants gain the skills and connections to become local leaders
- Engagement builds social bonds and a shared sense of purpose

The deep commitment of local government officials to the well-being of their communities is a bridge between the principled and practical arguments. This is the reason that most people run for office. Elected officials almost always live in the communities they serve, and most staff live in or near the jurisdictions where they work.

If community engagement leads to better problem solving and better outcomes, then the practical case meets the principled case for anyone in government who is committed to getting things done and strengthening their communities in the process.

### STATE AND FEDERAL REQUIREMENTS

Compliance with state and federal rules is another reason that local governments should be thoughtful about community engagement. Federal and state requirements shape the conditions for community engagement at the local level.

Federal agencies generally require some level of local community engagement for projects they oversee or fund, and federal laws related to equity are broadly applicable to local jurisdictions. Key examples include [Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964](#), its application to [language access](#), the [Americans with Disabilities Act](#), and the [Freedom of Information Act](#).

The U.S Department of Transportation and the Federal Transit Administration are clear about these requirements. Any Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) that represents local jurisdictions and receives federal transportation funding is expected to develop a [Public Participation Plan](#) that informs its programs and projects.

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) gives [guidance to local governments](#) on public participation. The agency has been a leader among federal agencies in applying the basic principles of public participation to decision making at all levels of government. EPA also provides guidance to community members with respect to [environmental justice](#) and the [assessment of environmental impacts](#) for local projects subject to the [National Environmental Policy Act \(NEPA\)](#).

Even when it is not a matter of legal compliance, federal agencies like the [National Park Service](#) provide resources to encourage and support community engagement.

Disaster preparedness is a focus of community engagement for many local governments, often with guidance from the federal government. [Local Emergency Planning Committees \(LEPCs\)](#) are community-based organizations that assist in preparing for emergencies, particularly those concerning hazardous materials. The Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) [Community Emergency Response Team \(CERT\)](#) program educates volunteers about disaster preparedness for the hazards that may impact their area and trains them in basic disaster response skills.

State governments also create the parameters for community engagement through their own laws, programs, and funding requirements. At a minimum, every local government must comply with the state's [public records and meeting law](#). As at the federal level, transportation and other large infrastructure projects have specific requirements. In rural or unincorporated communities, the

construction or improvement of a local highway, water line, sewage or drainage system might be entirely within the jurisdiction of a state agency (or in partnership with a special district). As the lead agency, the state agency oversees the plan and sets the standards for public outreach and engagement.

In Oregon, state law is particularly clear about public participation in local government decision making around land use. The state established its basic goal for “citizen involvement” in land use planning nearly fifty years ago, earning its reputation as a national leader in public participation.<sup>6</sup>

#### **Future Research:**

Examine the role of the federal and state governments in supporting community engagement by local jurisdictions. Examine how the Oregon Department of Land Conservation and Development (DLCD) and Land Conservation and Development Commission (LCDC) and other state agencies can support local government capacity for community engagement through policies, training, and consultation.

## **Project Description**

### **PROJECT SCOPE**

Community engagement is universally recognized as a vital skill for local government leaders. There is a wide field of study and practice related to community engagement and public participation. This report focuses on efforts by local governments in Oregon to build their capacity to engage community members in decision making processes. We explain what we mean by capacity building and suggest general categories to describe and analyze cases in Oregon. By “local government” we mean **cities**, **counties**, and **special districts**, each of which has different needs and priorities but all of which seek to engage the communities they serve.

We offer this report as an exploratory study pointing to areas for further research and possible action. We do not analyze or endorse the quality of the services provided by organizations, consultants, or trainers. We simply identify some of the opportunities available to local governments. To the extent possible, we describe the content of the programs and curricula we discovered, but we do not evaluate them individually or collectively (for example, whether they actually help to build capacity or advance equity). Our study is normative only to the extent that we assume it is beneficial for local governments to empower their community members to participate in decision making. We strongly encourage further research to assess the effectiveness of various approaches to achieving this goal.

### **RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

We investigated what local governments are doing to build their capacity, why they are doing it, who helps them, and what the results have been. Our research questions:

- What does the comparative literature (worldwide and national) have to say about local government capacity building for community engagement?
- What are the characteristics and components of a robust community engagement program?
- What are the skills required to be effective?

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<sup>6</sup> OAR 660-015-0000(1), <https://www.oregon.gov/lcd/OP/Documents/goal01.pdf>. See also <https://www.oregon.gov/lcd/OP/Pages/Goal-1.aspx>.

- How do local governments in Oregon build their capacity for community engagement?
- Who provides training and support for community engagement in Oregon?
- What are the content and methods by which this support is delivered?
- How do Oregon colleges and universities contribute to government capacity (through education, skill building, and certification)?
- What kinds of additional training and support do local governments need?
- What can we learn from local government efforts at capacity building (success factors, challenges, lessons for other jurisdictions)?

## DEFINITIONS

This report does not make a rigorous distinction between commonly used terms in the field. We use some words interchangeably that may have different connotations in certain contexts (e.g., public vs. community, involvement vs. engagement). We use “community engagement” to refer to the commitments and behaviors of local governments to bring those affected by government action into the decision-making process. At a minimum, the purpose is to keep the community informed. More ambitiously, it is to increase public participation and influence.

We acknowledge that various terms can be used to describe a spectrum of engagement and participation based on the scope and purpose of those activities. We use “community engagement” most often in this report because (a) it is widely used in Oregon, (b) the valid discussions about terms do not bear directly on the substance of our empirical research, and (c) the words “community” and “engagement” are broadly inclusive of practices at the local level (avoiding, for example, a narrower reference to “citizens” and considering “outreach” to be a subset of “engagement”).

We distinguish “community engagement” from “civic engagement.” Civic engagement encompasses a broader range of participation by community members in public life (e.g., civic-oriented groups or community events), as well as a wider field of inquiry. “Civic engagement” relates to the subject of this report insofar as local governments can and do take intentional actions to promote it (“community building”), and because the strength of civic bonds and the capacity of community members to advocate for their own interests affect the government’s capacity to engage the public.

## METHODOLOGY

We began with a literature review to describe the global field of study and practice on building local government capacity for community engagement, including an inventory of major organizations that work in the field beyond Oregon (Appendix 1). We also explored academic programs in North America that offer degree programs focused on community engagement, and we identified programs and coursework at public universities in Oregon that offer educational resources related to community engagement (Appendix 2).

We conducted interviews with national and international experts to help frame the research and identify broad trends and practices in the field. We cite various texts and resources in the report as references for our conceptual analysis.

Following this broad review of the field, our research was mainly empirical and centered on Oregon. We interviewed people working in government (staff and elected officials), universities, professional

associations, consulting firms, and community organizations. They gave their time generously and pointed us to a wealth of information and resources. We also sent a survey to neighborhood program coordinators at local governments in the Pacific Northwest through the Regional Area Neighborhood Coordinators (RANC) network.

### **DELIVERABLES**

The report includes the following deliverables:

- Narrative description of the global field of practice.
- Description of the potential elements of a capacity building program.
- Classification of different ways of delivering/receiving training and support.
- Categories of providers and services that promote capacity building.
- Sources of education, training, consultation, and support in Oregon.
- Inventory of university coursework and degree programs.
- Case examples of local government efforts to build their capacity.
- Findings and Recommendations.
- Resources for governments and practitioners.

### **PROJECT TEAM**

- Greg Greenway, CPS Senior Fellow, Project Manager
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## **Report Overview**

The report has a conceptual section and an empirical section.

The first section covers the meaning and value of our topic: local government capacity building for community engagement. It specifies the subject of our study, makes a case for its importance, describes the elements of capacity building, and suggests a typology of service providers. It is intended to contribute to the field beyond Oregon.

The second section describes the state of the field in Oregon. It is a snapshot of what we learned during our research from Fall 2020 to Summer 2021. We follow the categories in the previous section to identify organizations that provide services to local governments, then we highlight some examples from specific jurisdictions.

We conclude with a summary of findings and recommendations based on our research.

The report has three appendices. They are the first steps we took to frame the topic, and they stand on their own as valuable research. Appendix 1 is a review of the comparative literature related to capacity building for local government community engagement. Appendix 2 is a comprehensive survey of



academic coursework related to community engagement at public universities in Oregon, with additional attention to academic programs in North America.

We offer the report as a guide with the expectation that individual readers will have more interest in some sections than others depending on their professional orientation. Some may want to read the report from beginning to end, but we also hope to provide value to those who are seeking more focused information about specific kinds of service providers, engagement tools, or local government efforts. We know we missed some people and organizations working in the field, and we welcome feedback from those who can help create a more complete picture through further research and collaboration. Appendix 3 provides a description of some of the consultants and online service providers we heard about.

## ***BUILDING CAPACITY FOR COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT***

### **Conceptual Overview**

Local governments across the United States and around the world are moving away from a traditional top-down approach of public administration to greater partnership and collaboration between local governments and their communities. Effective community engagement is essential to this shift. This more collaborative approach to governance goes by many names: Participatory Democracy, Deliberative Democracy, Collaborative Governance, Local Democracy, Shared Governance, and others.

This section discusses concepts that help to frame this work, proposes a spectrum of local government approaches to community engagement, and describes elements that local governments could include as part of a robust community engagement strategy and program.

### ***TRADITIONAL PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION VS. SHARED GOVERNANCE***

Public administration in the United States has a long tradition of seeing a limited role for the public in policy development and the day-to-day operations of government (Cooper 2011). This tradition is rooted in the Progressive Reform movement of the early 20th Century that sought to ground public administration in “norms of professionalism, efficiency, scientific management, and administrative management.” The movement led to the creation of “barriers against the influence of the citizenry on the day-to-day administration of government (pp. 239-240).”

This traditional form of public administration is marked by a top-down, expert driven approach that has been characterized as a “parent-child” relationship between government leaders, staff, and the community (Leighninger 2006).

Leighninger maintains that elected officials and administrators today are finding it more difficult to govern.<sup>7</sup> Many community members are alienated from government as a focus of collective action, they trust government less than in the past, and they are less willing to pay to support government services.

Leighninger also asserts that problems facing communities are more complex than in the past, and local government leaders find themselves needing to leverage community resources to solve these problems

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<sup>7</sup> Matt Leighninger, *The Next Form of Democracy: How Expert Rule is Giving Way to Shared Governance—and Why Politics Will Never Be the Same* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 2006).

because “government can’t do it on its own.”<sup>8</sup> He suggests that many community members are increasingly looking for an “adult-adult” partnership with government, in which both the government and the community work together to solve the community’s problems.<sup>9</sup>

Many local government leaders and staff see value in shifting to a new model of shared governance. They believe that this model depends on the willingness and skills of local government leaders and staff to engage and partner with their diverse communities.

## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND EQUITY

Community engagement and equity are complementary and overlapping concepts, although each has a particular focus and scope of action.

- **Community Engagement:** Effective community engagement is grounded in the principle that people in the community should have a voice in decisions that affect them. Good community engagement processes identify differently affected communities within the larger community and use a variety of culturally appropriate tools, techniques, and programs to ensure that the voices of members of these communities are heard in local decision-making processes.
- **Equity:** In the context of this report, equity refers to efforts to overcome disparities in the processes and outcomes of local government decision making. Equity means that governments should acknowledge and actively address historical and current disparities—in organizational culture, hiring and contracting, and in their approach to community engagement for visioning, strategies, planning, policies, programs, and projects. We treat equity as a broader concept that encompasses and informs the practices of public participation and community engagement.

Portland’s “A Framework for Equity: Making Equity Real” defines equity as follows:

Equity is when everyone has access to the opportunities necessary to satisfy their essential needs, advance their well-being and achieve their full potential. We have a shared fate as individuals within a community and communities within a society. All communities need the ability to shape their own present and future. Equity is both a means to healthy communities and an end that benefits us all.<sup>10</sup>

The Framework asserts that the promise of equity and opportunity is real when:

- All Portlanders have access to a high-quality education, living wage jobs, safe neighborhoods, basic services, a healthy natural environment, efficient public transit, parks and greenspaces, decent housing and healthy food.
- The benefits of growth and change are equitably shared across our communities. No one community is overly burdened by the region’s growth.
- All Portlanders and communities fully participate in and influence public decision-making.
- Portland is a place where your future is not limited by your race, gender, sexual orientation, disability, age, income, where you were born or where you live.

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<sup>8</sup> Leighninger, p. 1.

<sup>9</sup> Leighninger, p. 2.

<sup>10</sup> “A Framework for Equity: Making Equity Real” (Portland: City of Portland, 2012), 1.

- Underrepresented communities are engaged partners in policy decisions.<sup>11</sup>

The Local and Regional Government Alliance on Race & Equity (GARE) publication “Racial Equity: Getting to Results” states that “racial inequities exist across every indicator for success—including health, criminal justice, education, jobs, housing, and beyond.”<sup>12</sup> GARE asserts that “government has a key role in advancing racial equity.”<sup>13</sup> GARE seeks to model “at the local level how it is truly possible for government to advance racial equity and to develop into an inclusive and effective democracy”.<sup>14</sup> GARE offers local governments many useful guides and tools for how to advance equity.

GARE’s “[Six-Part Strategic Approach to Institutional Change](#)” encourages local governments to Normalize, Organize, and Operationalize:

- Use a racial equity framework.
- Build organizational capacity.
- Implement racial equity tools.
- Be data-driven.
- Partner with other institutions and communities.
- Operate with urgency and accountability.

It is important for government officials not to assume that equitable outcomes will be a natural byproduct of all community engagement. When designed, planned, and executed with the intention to ensure equity, community engagement is an essential way to promote equitable outcomes in any context for government. However, without this intention and a grounding in the concepts addressed above, community engagement efforts run the risk of reinforcing oppressive structures and systems, undermining equity work in the process.

### TARGETED UNIVERSALISM

“Targeted Universalism” is a framework to help local governments integrate community engagement and equity into their work. Wendy Willis, in her 2020 article, states that for those “interested in broad, deep, and authentic community engagement, targeted universalism provides a promising framework that takes its eyes off the majority culture as the benchmark in favor of a goal set to serve everyone.”<sup>15</sup>

Willis describes targeted universalism as “setting universal goals pursued by targeted processes to achieve those goals. Within a targeted universalism framework, universal goals are established for all

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<sup>11</sup> City of Portland, 1.

<sup>12</sup> Erika Bernabei, “Racial Equity: Getting to Results” (Local and Regional Government Alliance on Racial Equity, 2017), 4. [https:// www.racialequityalliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/GARE\\_GettingtoEquity\\_July2017\\_PUBLISH.pdf](https://www.racialequityalliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/GARE_GettingtoEquity_July2017_PUBLISH.pdf)

<sup>13</sup> Bernabei, 4.

<sup>14</sup> Bernabei, 4.

<sup>15</sup> Wendy Willis, “Take a Seat at Oregon’s Kitchen Table: Adapting Targeted Universalism for Broad and Deep Civic Engagement,” National Civic Review 108, no. 4 (2020). <https://www.nationalcivicleague.org/ncr-article/take-a-seat-at-oregons-kitchen-tableadapting-targeted-universalism-for-broad-and-deep-civic-engagement/>

groups concerned. The strategies developed to achieve those goals are targeted, based on how different groups are situated within structures, culture, and across geographies to obtain the universal goal.”<sup>16</sup>

Willis identifies the five steps to “designing and implementing a targeted universalist policy or project” as the following:

1. Establish a universal goal.
2. Assess general population performance relative to the goal.
3. Identify groups and places that are performing differently with respect to the goal and disaggregate them.
4. Assess and understand the structures that support or impede each group from achieving the universal goal.
5. Develop and implement targeted strategies for each group.<sup>17</sup>

Willis describes how Oregon’s Kitchen Table applies targeted universalism to civic engagement. When elected officials or public managers invite Oregon’s Kitchen Table to “partner with them in engaging community members around a particular decision or cluster of decisions,” Oregon’s Kitchen Table does the following:

- Determine the type of input that would be meaningful for the decision at hand....
- Set an engagement goal for the community as a whole, either in percentage terms or in raw numbers.
- Use census and other demographic data to determine who is living in the community.
- Set numeric participation goals for each demographic subgroup in the community....
- Conduct an assessment to determine how specific subgroups have or have not participated in the past and identify specific barriers to participation for these groups.
- Identify organizers and other connectors in the targeted communities—primarily local organizers who have deep relationships and who work in the community, sometimes in formal roles, often in less formal ones.<sup>18</sup>

## **SPECTRUM OF GOVERNMENT APPROACHES TO COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

Community engagement efforts vary significantly in their scope and effectiveness across different communities. This variation reflects the many ways that local government leaders and staff view the role of government and the extent to which they value engaging community members in local decision making. It also reflects the level of resources that local governments devote to community engagement. These different approaches also reflect the extent to which local governments adopt the traditional “parent-child” relationship as compared to the shared governance “adult-adult” partnership approach.

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<sup>16</sup> Willis, “Take a Seat Oregon’s Kitchen Table.”

<sup>17</sup> Willis, ““Take a Seat at Oregon’s Kitchen Table.”

<sup>18</sup> Willis, ““Take a Seat at Oregon’s Kitchen Table.”

We offer a four-step spectrum to illustrate general levels of local government approaches to community engagement. Local governments may find it helpful to think about where they are on this spectrum and where they would like to be. The categories are broad and intended to inspire further conversations.

### **1. DOING THE MINIMUM REQUIRED**

A local government limits its community engagement efforts to complying with statutory and legal requirements to notify and engage the public. This level is characterized by the government holding public meetings, providing formal notice to homeowners and a limited number of stakeholders, and allowing minimum public comment (often described as “two minutes at the microphone”). Many community members find this approach unsatisfying because it limits their ability to provide meaningful input on decisions.

### **2. TRADITIONAL COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT TOOLS**

Most local governments use traditional community engagement tools to reach and engage the public beyond the legally required minimum. Examples include wider public announcements, additional public meetings, open houses, town halls, boards and commissions, and advisory committees.

Traditional community engagement tools tend to focus more on informing the public about government actions rather than engaging the community in shaping local decision making. Processes are typically one-size-fits-all with little effort to tailor their efforts to reach groups within the community who may be hard to reach. Processes are designed primarily to serve the government’s need to complete a plan or deliver a project. This kind of engagement is often described as “box checking,” with many community members feeling that the government is “going through the motions” to fulfill a formal obligation with little attention to meaningful input in decision making.

### **3. BEST PRACTICES FOR COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

Local governments that use community engagement best practices seek to identify who is affected by a potential policy, program, or project and use strategies to reach and engage different groups in the community. Rather than a one-size-fits-all approach, communications are tailored to different groups and provide the information community members need to participate. Community members often understand the process, feel heard, and may feel they have an impact. At this level, local governments design their community engagement strategies to serve the needs of both government and the community.

This approach is commendable (and can even be exemplary), but its effectiveness is limited if applied episodically. At this level, a local government may apply well-designed engagement processes to particular projects or programs, but it does not use these practices consistently across all policies, programs, and projects. The quality of community engagement often depends on the leadership of individual elected officials, department heads, or staff who understand and value good community engagement.

The limitation of this approach is that it is not fully institutionalized or sustainable through changes in leadership. Best practices and information about how to engage the community are not necessarily shared across departments. Efforts to engage different ethnic and cultural groups often end with the completion of an individual project without developing long-term relationships. No overarching goals or standards guide and institutionalize community engagement practices. When key elected leaders, administrators, or staff move on, the use of best practices may diminish.

#### **4. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PROGRAM AND CULTURE**

The highest level of community engagement occurs when a local government has created and embedded a culture of effective community engagement throughout the organization. The local government uses appropriate best practices in developing all its policies, programs, projects, and decision-making processes.

At this level, elected officials adopt formal principles, goals, and standards that define effective community engagement and ensure they are followed. Elected officials, administrators, staff, and the community share an understanding of what good engagement looks like and their roles in achieving it.

Local governments develop a clear understanding of the demographics of the community and the different types of groups within their community. Local government leaders and staff also identify the community leaders and organizations within these groups that can help the government develop culturally appropriate strategies and tools to engage and partner with the full diversity of the community.

Elected officials support government staff in developing long-term relationships with community organizations to build trust, understanding, and partnerships.

Community engagement skills and experience are factored into the recruitment, hiring, and evaluation of employees responsible for community engagement across departments. Best practices are identified and the organization invests in the training and tools necessary to support their staff and build their skills. Peer networking opportunities allow staff to share lessons learned about different groups in the community and practices that work. Skilled community engagement consultants sometimes are used to augment staff capacity when needed.

Local government leaders and staff connect and collaborate with other jurisdictions, organizations, and institutions that serve the same community, sharing knowledge and coordinating their community engagement strategies and activities.

The table on the next page summarizes the spectrum described here.

## SPECTRUM OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT CAPACITY

Local government capacity to engage the community can vary significantly. The spectrum below illustrates different approaches to community engagement. Local governments may find it helpful to think about where they are on this spectrum and where they would like to be. The categories are broad and intended to inspire further conversation.

|          |  |   |
|----------|--|---|
| <b>1</b> | <p><b>DOING THE MINIMUM REQUIRED</b></p> <p>Local government limits its community engagement efforts to complying with statutory and legal requirements to notify and engage the public.</p>   | <p>Local government holds public meetings, provides formal notice to homeowners and a limited number of stakeholders, and allows minimum public comment (often described as “two minutes at the microphone”). Many community members find this approach unsatisfying because it limits their ability to provide meaningful input on decisions.</p>  |
| <b>2</b> | <p><b>TRADITIONAL COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT TOOLS</b></p> <p>Local government uses traditional community engagement tools to reach and engage the public beyond the legally required minimum. Examples include wider public announcements, additional public meetings, open houses, town halls, boards and commissions, and advisory committees.</p>                    | <p>Traditional community engagement tools tend to focus on informing the public about government actions rather than engaging the community in decision making. Processes typically are one-size-fits-all with little effort to tailor their efforts to reach diverse groups in the community. Processes are designed primarily to serve the government’s need to complete a plan or deliver a project. Community members may feel that the government is “going through the motions” to fulfill a formal obligation rather than seeking meaningful community input.</p>  |
| <b>3</b> | <p><b>SOME USE OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT BEST PRACTICES</b></p> <p>Local government uses community engagement best practices for certain projects, policies, or programs to identify and engage the broader diversity of people and groups affected, and to provide meaningful opportunities for the public to shape final outcomes.</p>                             | <p>Communications and outreach are tailored to different groups and provide the information community members need to participate. Community members often understand the process, feel heard, and may feel they have an impact. Well-designed engagement processes are used on a case-by-case basis, but not across all the jurisdiction’s projects, policies, and programs. The quality of each engagement effort depends on the leadership of individual elected officials, department heads, or staff who understand and value good community engagement.</p>   |
| <b>4</b> | <p><b>FULLY EMBEDDED AND JURISDICTION-WIDE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT CULTURE</b></p> <p>Local government has created and embedded a culture of effective community engagement throughout the organization. Local government uses appropriate community engagement best practices in developing all its policies, programs, projects, and decision-making processes.</p> | <p>Elected officials adopt formal principles, goals, and standards that define effective community engagement and ensure they are followed consistently. Community engagement skills and experience are factored into the recruitment, hiring, and evaluation of employees responsible for community engagement across departments. Best practices are identified, and the organization invests in the training and tools necessary to support their staff and build their skills. Elected officials support government staff in developing long-term relationships with community organizations to build trust, understanding, and partnerships.</p> |

## Elements of a Robust Community Engagement Program and Culture

A robust, jurisdiction-wide community engagement program and culture could include many different elements. This section describes some of the specific policies, strategies, and tools that could be part of a strong local government community engagement program and culture.

We recognize that smaller communities will have fewer resources and likely less capacity than larger ones to implement the full range of these elements. Organizations and institutions that support local governments in Oregon could enhance the capacity of smaller communities to implement more of these approaches and practices.

This is not a theoretical exercise. While all these elements may not exist in any single jurisdiction, each of them has been implemented by one or more local governments in Oregon.

These practices/approaches are grouped into:

1. Policies and Standards
2. Equity
3. Building Government Capacity
4. Building Community Capacity
5. Intergovernmental Coordination and Collaboration
6. Innovative Tools and Processes
7. Accountability

### ***POLICIES AND STANDARDS***

Elected officials can adopt policies that set expectations and guide community engagement throughout the local government. This can help embed effective community engagement practices in the local government structures and culture. Examples include:

- **Community Engagement Principles and Standards:** Define and set standards for effective community engagement.
- **Strategic Plan to Increase Community Engagement:** Establish a vision for success over time, supported by goals, strategies, and recommendations.
- **Formal Assessment Tool:** Use a formal assessment tool to guide leaders and staff in determining when to engage the community and at what level.
- **Department-specific community engagement plans:** Tailor approaches to the kind of work each department does and the community members who are affected by the department's work. These plans should include an assessment of the department's current capacity to engage the community and identification of the resources needed to expand this capacity.
- **Comprehensive Plan Program for Land Use Planning:** Update the local jurisdiction's State mandated chapter to comply with [Oregon's Statewide Planning Goal 1](#) to reflect current principles and best practices.
- **Local Government Charter/Guiding Documents:** Update these to formalize a general role of the community in government decision making.



## **EQUITY**

Equitable engagement requires that all community members impacted by government decisions be informed and given an opportunity to participate in decision making processes, including those who would never otherwise hear about the public process, are reluctant to participate, have been passively ignored, or have been actively excluded. As a practical matter, this means that governments must work with great intention to include those who are harder to reach than others who typically participate or can easily access information.

From the standpoint of community engagement, an equity lens affects the practices of communication (What is your message and how do you convey it?), outreach (Who is your audience and how do you reach them?), and decision making (How do you gather public input and report back on how it affected the decision?).

Equity also requires making a conscientious and purposeful effort to establish a baseline for improvement through clear policies, plans, and guidance:

- Gather information to identify disparities in outcomes across different groups in the community.
- Develop an Equity Strategy and Plan that identifies clear goals, objectives and measurable outcomes.
- Use an equity lens to guide policies and programs for engaging affected communities in decision making.
- Build equitable outcomes into the evaluation of community engagement plans.

## **BUILDING GOVERNMENT CAPACITY**

Local governments need to have the internal capacity to design and implement effective community engagement activities.

- **Adequate Staffing/Job Descriptions**
  - Hire one or more staff with strong community engagement skills and experience who can advise and consult with elected leaders and departments on how to do high quality community engagement.
  - Create job descriptions and performance reviews for administrators and department heads that include knowledge of community engagement principles and best practices and experience engaging successfully with the community.
- **Who's in the Community?**
  - Review community demographics and self-identification of members.
  - Map civic capacity and leadership to build relationships and identify potential partners.
- **Best Practices Guides/Toolkits**
  - General community engagement guide/handbook.
  - How to develop an engagement plan for specific projects.
  - Effective outreach and communication.
  - Process design and techniques.
  - Meeting facilitation.
  - How to work effectively with community engagement consultants.

- Accessibility (e.g., ADA compliance, language interpretation/translation).
  - Advisory committees—creation, recruitment, and support.
  - Outreach strategies for specific communities
  - Digital engagement.
  - Survey design.
  - Effective town halls, listening sessions, focus groups.
  - Metrics and evaluation.
- **Training for Staff and Leaders**
    - Community engagement 101 (key principles and best practices).
    - Community engagement program development.
    - Design of community engagement strategies and plans.
    - Skill-building workshops.
    - Onboarding for newly elected leaders on values, policies, and practices.
- **Peer Networking and Support**
    - Convene regular formal and informal gatherings of and communication between community engagement staff within and across jurisdictions to share information about the community and engagement practices.
    - Use peer networking forums and opportunities through professional organizations (e.g. ELGL, ICMA, OCCMA, etc.) to discuss community engagement tools and practices.
- **Communications and Social Media**
    - Develop an overall strategy to guide and support effective communication with the full diversity of the community by government leaders and staff.
    - Perform regular outreach to the community to let people know what local government is doing, other community events, and opportunities to engage—considering print, radio, and other media to bridge the digital divide.
    - Maintain a government website that is designed to be accessible to the full diversity of community members and that provides relevant and useful information for community members.
    - Use social media tools and strategies to extend outreach.
    - Consider online suites of tools for communication and community input.
- **Formal Notification System:** : Ensure that required formal notifications of proposed actions and decisions reach all types of affected community members (not just property owners) and include information that is clear, relevant, and useful to community members.
  - **Boards, Commissions, Advisory Committees:** Develop best practices for forming and supporting these committees, including effective recruitment of diverse members, onboarding and ongoing support that gives members the information they need to be effective and feel their time is well spent, clear communication to the community, and coordination between staff supporting different committees.
  - **Major Planning Projects:** Use best practices in the design and implementation of important planning and policy development processes:
    - Community visioning.
    - Strategic planning.

- Comprehensive Plan updates.
- Community revitalization plans.
- Capital projects.
- Major policy development.
- **Community Surveys:** Execute well-designed and implemented surveys to identify community priorities and needs— either one time or recurring.

## ***BUILDING COMMUNITY CAPACITY***

Strengthening the capacity of community members to participate in government processes enhances the government’s ability to deliver information and engage the public in decision making processes.

- **Volunteer Coordination, Support, Recognition**

- Post volunteer activities for local government and community events, projects, committees, etc.
- Hire and train support staff to help coordinate the volunteer system.
- Award annual recognition to celebrate volunteers (chosen by government leaders or community members).

- **Community Leadership Training**

- Encourage the community to learn how government works.
- Support the community to learn how to organize and advocate for community issues and projects.

- **Partnership with Community and Neighborhood Organizations**

- Formally recognize neighborhood and other community-based groups as local government partners.
- Support staff and leaders to build long-term relationships with neighborhood and community partner organizations to support future collaboration.

- **Community Small Grants:** Make a small pot of funds available to a broad diversity of community and neighborhood groups to support community events and engagement activities and projects.

- **Fun Community Events:** Support community building with events that bring people together and help them see and connect with other community members.

- Examples include: community parades, picnics, art fairs, farmers markets, cultural festivals, scavenger hunts, and other community gatherings.
- Provide budget and staffing for planning, insurance, space, equipment, volunteer coordination, publicity, etc.

- **Convening the Community**

- Host community/neighborhood summits that bring together different community organizations to talk to each other and local government.
- Enable neighborhood and other community visioning processes to establish goals and strategies for subsets of the larger community.

## **INTERGOVERNMENTAL COORDINATION AND COLLABORATION**

Work with other local governments to expand knowledge and leverage resources.

- **Participate in regular meetings and coordination with other jurisdictions, institutions, and organizations:** overlapping boundaries that serve the same community (e.g. city, county, school districts, special districts, libraries, police, park systems, health systems, community service organizations, etc.) can provide opportunities for collaboration.
- **Take advantage of regular peer sharing opportunities:** community staff from different entities can share or co-create solutions to community issues.
- **Seek out good ideas from other jurisdictions and communities:** Identify useful examples of community engagement successes and failures from other jurisdictions and communities.

## **INNOVATIVE ENGAGEMENT TOOLS**

- **Deliberative processes and community dialogues:** convene the public to talk about important community issues.
- **Collaborative processes that convene stakeholders:** work through conflicts and find a path forward on challenging issues.
- **Participatory Budgeting processes:** allow community members to determine the use of a specific pot of funds or have some influence during the regular budgeting process.
- **Resident or Community Juries:** convene the community to make decisions on a particular question or questions posed by elected leaders.
- **Appreciative Inquiry/Appreciative Organizing:** work with leaders and the community to identify specific local government and community goals and strategies to achieve them.

## **ACCOUNTABILITY**

- **Evaluation:** develop consistent evaluation tools and track and regularly evaluate community engagement activities.
- **Annual “State of Community Engagement” report:** reaffirm community engagement principles and goals, reports on progress, and identifies additional work to be done.
- **Ongoing Community Engagement Advisory Committee/Council:** advises local government on how to improve the quality and consistency of community engagement. Example: the City of Portland’s [Public Involvement Advisory Council \(PIAC\)](#) is a model that includes both community members and government staff on the committee.
- **Public records request policies and system:** develop a process that is accessible and easy to use for the community.
- **Process to raise concerns about community engagement activities** (e.g., Ombudsman or Auditor).

## EXEMPLARY PRACTICES AROUND THE WORLD

Other countries offer intriguing examples of how national governments can encourage good community engagement at the local level. They suggest what an Oregon statewide community engagement policy might look like.

### Australia: Best Practice Consultation

Many British Commonwealth countries require some level of “public consultation” in government decision making. At a minimum this can look very much like the basic public meetings requirements in the United States, but some countries have certainly raised the bar on what good community engagement can look like.

One example is the Australian government’s guidance on [“Best Practice Consultation”](#) for the development of policies and regulations. The Guidance Note provides detailed guidance on how government agencies should engage stakeholders in genuine consultation processes to consider the “real-world impact” of policy options.<sup>19</sup>

### Scotland: National Community Engagement Policy

Scotland has a comprehensive national community engagement policy and related programs to support local government decision-making.

Some of the elements of this [“Community Empowerment” policy](#) include:

- Funding for projects that empower local communities, build community capacity, and promote more responsive, inclusive, community-led, and place-based approaches to meeting local needs.
- Funding for Participatory Budgeting projects.
- Support for Scotland’s 1,200 “community councils,” which are run by residents to benefit their communities.
- A formal “participation request” process that allows community members to request to participate in decisions and processes that affect them.
- National Standards for Community Engagement that establish best practices for public bodies to engage the community.
- Local Governance Review to examine “how local decisions are made and how local democracy is working.”
- Supporting “community planning” processes to improve the way public service providers develop and deliver services.

[Scotland’s National Community Engagement Standards](#) establish “clear principles that describe the main elements of effective community engagement.” The Standards are intended for:

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<sup>19</sup> “Guidance Note: Best Practice Consultation,” (Australian Government, Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, 2016). <https://pmc.gov.au/sites/default/files/publications/best-practice-consultation.pdf>

- **Public sector bodies and elected representatives** “to help them plan how to involve communities in shaping local plans and services, identify who should be involved, and make sure that the community engagement process is fair and effective.”
- **Third sector organizations and community groups** to help them involve their members or the wider community in shaping the services they deliver, and to make sure that they accurately represent members’ or communities’ views in other decision-making processes.”
- **The private and independent sector** “to help agencies and businesses involve and work with the community in planning developments and designing services.”

The Scottish approach is based on [7 Standards for Community Engagement](#).



## TRAINING AND SUPPORT FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENTS

Engaging the community in local decision-making requires specific skills, knowledge, and experience, as well as an organizational culture that supports this work.

We first established the basic concepts, values, and characteristics of good community engagement. We then identified the activities, projects, and programs that could make up a robust local government community engagement program and culture.

As we interviewed people working in this field, we quickly realized that they gain useful knowledge in a variety of ways and from a broad array of different sources and providers—not just traditional training programs. We expanded the scope of our study to focus not only on how local jurisdictions develop skills in individuals but also the organizational capacity to support and sustain this work.

This section discusses (1) the various ways that local government staff, elected officials, and consultants build their skills; (2) the specific skills and knowledge that help local governments create and implement effective community engagement programs; (3) the many different categories of providers and mechanisms that help individuals gain this knowledge and build their capacity.

### **Future Research:**

Interview local government leaders and champions in community engagement to identify how they were introduced to the concepts of community engagement, how they developed their enthusiasm for the field, and how they learned the strategies, skills, techniques of successful and effective community engagement.

## Approaches to Skill Building

Local government leaders and staff develop effective community engagement skills and capacity in different ways—often not through traditional training workshops.

- **Participation in Training Workshops/Courses/Webinars**—attending short sessions, traditional partday or multi-day workshops and training courses.
- **Partnerships with skilled community engagement consultants**—working with consultants who model community engagement strategies and best practices and techniques.
- **Partnerships with community-based organizations**—learning how to engage specific communities effectively, respectfully, and equitably by partnering with organizations grounded in the lived experience of each of these communities.
- **Personal experiences with community engagement successes and failures**—development of skills and knowledge over time through personal experience with processes and projects that work well and those that struggle or fail.
- **Peer Learning**—participating in formal and informal networks of professional peers who work with the community, either within or across the departments of a single jurisdiction, or networks of peers across different jurisdictions that share practical knowledge, advice, support, and resources.
- **Resources from Other Organizations**—Guides, toolkits, and manuals for a wide variety of practices and processes, developed by other public agencies or by organizations devoted to supporting local governments.

## Training and Skill Categories

A broad range of skills and knowledge can help support effective community engagement design, planning, and implementation.

### **GENERAL SKILLS:**

- Basic Principles and Values of Community Engagement
- Planning and Process Design for Outreach and Engagement
- Community Demographics, Data Collection, and Asset Mapping
- Culturally Appropriate Engagement (Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, Access)

### **SPECIFIC SKILLS:**

- **Evaluation**—Developing evaluation systems to measure not just programmatic activity but also outcomes of community engagement.
- **Communications**—Utilizing effective communication strategies for reaching the full diversity of the community in different situations, including in-person, print, social media, etc.
- **Meeting Facilitation**—Designing effective meeting and using facilitation strategies and techniques to ensure meetings are productive and participants feel respected and heard.
- **Dispute Resolution**—Employing strategies and techniques for helping parties work through conflicts and seek a constructive path forward.
- **Appreciative Inquiry/Appreciative Organizing**—Using “dialogue, listening, storytelling, community networks, social bonding, and leadership” to design and lead “meaningful community engagement initiatives that result in transformative partnerships.”<sup>20</sup>
- **Online tools**—Using digital engagement techniques and tools to communicate and share information with and gather input from the public.
- **Advisory Committees**—Creating and supporting diverse and productive participation by community members on local government boards, commissions, and advisory committees.
- **Working with Consultants**—Understanding how to choose a community engagement consultant, how to write and administer a good contract and, and how to work with the consultant to the benefit of the local government and the community.
- **Working with Vulnerable People or People with Challenging Behaviors**—Knowing how to work effectively with people who are angry and hostile or are experiencing a wide variety of trauma and/or mental health issues.
- **Volunteer Management and Recognition**—Recruiting, supporting, and recognizing the good work of community volunteers.
- **Community Grant Programs**—Developing and administering effective community grant programs that encourage participation by the full diversity of the community and build capacity in community leaders and organizations.

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<sup>20</sup> Shelly Parini, “Appreciative Organizing: Charting a Course for Community Engagement,” *Interdisciplinary Journal of Partnership Studies* 2, no. 2 (2015), 1. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.24926/ijps.v2i2.115>.



- **Community Leadership Academies**—Creating and supporting community leadership academies that raise awareness of how government works and help community members build strong leadership skills.
- **Building Strong Relationships with Community-Based Organizations**—Creating and administering effective programs to engage, strengthen the capacity of, and build relationships with organizations that represent both geographic communities (e.g. Neighborhood Associations/Councils) and ethnic and cultural identity community organizations.
- **Deliberative Community Dialogues**—Designing and supporting deliberative dialogues that bring community members together to address complex issues.
- **Accessibility/ADA training**—Making processes and events accessible to people with a range of different disabilities.
- **Community Visioning**—Developing strategies and techniques for engaging the community in developing a shared vision to guide future strategic planning, program development, and evaluation.
- **Community Strategic Planning**—Engaging the community in developing a strategy to achieve the community’s shared vision, accomplish specific goals, or support community revitalization.
- **Comprehensive Planning**—Engaging the community in developing and reviewing State-mandated, long-range plans for the jurisdiction’s land use, housing, transportation, economic development, natural resources and other major areas of local government responsibility.
- **Participatory Budgeting**— Engaging a diversity of community members in democratic deliberation and decision-making to discuss, set priorities and determine how to spend a specific pot of funding set aside by a local government.
- **Effective Formal Notification**— Increasing the likelihood that formal required notification of local government decisions and actions will reach the affected community members.

## Types of Service Providers

Local government leaders and staff in Oregon can get support in strengthening their community engagement skills and capacity from many types of providers. In this section, we list generic categories of providers that we identified through our research and interviews so that they may be useful to the field in general. We also identify specific resources available in Oregon under each of these categories.

Some provider organizations are national but may also have local affiliates or chapters in Oregon. Local leaders and staff in Oregon who are members of these organizations can access training and capacity building assistance from the national and local entities.

We also identified several organizations that may not offer support to local governments now but could do so in the future. For instance, some state agencies have regional field offices and staff that already provide technical support to local governments.

The categories of providers we identified:

- Community Engagement Trainers
- Local Government In-House Training
- Local Government Associations

- Councils of Governments and Regional Collaboratives
- Professional Associations
- Municipal Support Organizations
- Consulting Firms
- Academic Institutions
- Community Organizing and Advocacy Groups
- Dialogue and Deliberation
- Equity Organizations
- Online Tool Providers
- Peer Support Networks
- Foundations and Funding Organizations
- Civic Organizations
- Journals and Other Publications
- Research and Information Clearinghouses
- State and Federal Agency Programs

#### **COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT TRAINERS**

Organizations and consultants who offer training and workshops specifically focused on the design and implementation of community engagement strategies, processes, and plans. They may also offer certification programs, conferences, networking opportunities, and other resources.

#### **LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN-HOUSE TRAINING**

Some local governments have developed in-house “Community Engagement 101” and “Equity 101” training programs. Offering this type of training to employees and departments can help local governments build a common policy framework and common language around values, strategies, tools, and support resources across all departments.

#### **LOCAL GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATIONS**

Organizations of local government jurisdictions (cities, counties, special districts, school districts) that provide their members with a range of conferences, workshops, webinars, mentoring, resources, and award and recognition programs. There are also organizations that serve specific groups of local elected and appointed leaders (mayors, planning commissioners, members of boards and commissions) that offer conferences, workshops, resources, networking, and peer support.

#### **COUNCILS OF GOVERNMENTS AND REGIONAL COLLABORATIVES**

Councils of governments and regional collaboratives are important elements of Oregon’s local government infrastructure. Both organizational forms bring together government and other stakeholders to address policy and service issues in their districts and provide a wide range of planning and support services to their participating jurisdictions and direct services to people in their communities.

#### **PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS**

Organizations that support specific groups of local government professionals (city managers, public works directors, land use planners, transportation planners, utility engineers, local health professionals, emerging leaders, etc.). These organizations offer their members opportunities to attend conferences, workshops and events, learn about new research in their field, continuing education, certification programs, peer networking, mentoring, regular communications, legislative and policy tracking, career support, and recognition and awards for exceptional projects and work.

## **MUNICIPAL SUPPORT ORGANIZATIONS**

Nonprofit organizations devoted to promoting and supporting good government at the local level, often in collaboration with associations that represent cities, counties, and special districts. They provide local leaders with (generally free) information, tools, webinars, case studies and other resources to build capacity for community engagement. Some organizations provide legal, policy, and programmatic support and advice to local governments on specific challenging issues..

## **CONSULTING FIRMS**

**Community Engagement Consultants:** Private firms that offer a broad range of services to help local governments design and implement community engagement plans and processes for a wide variety of policy, program, and project activities. They may offer facilitation services for challenging meetings, tailored training for local staff, advice on the development of community engagement policies and programs, and other specialized consultation services.

**Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Consultants:** Consultants who work with local governments to build their capacity to engage communities of color and other historically underrepresented communities, and to build the capacity of these communities to have a voice in local decision-making. They may also assist local governments in public relations, facilitating culturally appropriate focus groups and community surveys, helping local government agencies to assess their internal cultures and implement diversity, equity, and inclusion goals.

**Planning, Engineering, Environmental, and Economic Development Consultants:** Some consulting firms have created in-house community engagement teams that can provide community engagement services to local governments as part of larger engineering, environmental, housing, transportation, or economic development projects.

**Public Relations Consultants:** Some local governments consult with public relations firms to assist them in engaging the community and other stakeholders around basic communications, project or policy advocacy, and crisis management.

**Other Types of Consultants:** Other types of consultants also can help local governments build their capacity and effectively engage with their communities through processes like community visioning, strategic planning, and recruitment. See Appendix 3 for some examples of each of these types of consulting firms active in Oregon.

## **ACADEMIC INSTITUTIONS**

**Higher Education Degree/Certification Programs and Courses:** Some higher education institutions offer degree or certification programs devoted to community engagement. Some subject area programs offer individual courses on community engagement tailored to their specific field (e.g., public administration, land use planning, social work, health care, education, criminal justice). See Appendix 2 for more detail.

Higher Education Academic Institutes: Some higher education institutions are home to policy institutes. Some of these programs offer community engagement research, consulting services, and training workshops. They will often work with local governments to help design and implement community engagement processes.

## **COMMUNITY ORGANIZING AND ADVOCACY GROUPS**

A growing number of community-based organizations advocate for the interests of communities based on shared cultural identity. These organizations can be valuable partners to local governments seeking to engage with these communities. It is important to recognize that the mission of these groups is not specifically to help local governments do their work, but to empower their communities. Local governments should be prepared to compensate these organizations for their assistance.

Developing long-term, mutually beneficial partnership relationships between local government and community organizations can advance equitable engagement and help local leaders and staff improve their cultural awareness and culturally appropriate skill sets. These organizations might see a longer-term benefit from developing community engagement training programs for local government officials and staff that could increase the effectiveness of their own advocacy work.

## **DIALOGUE AND DELIBERATION**

**Dialogue and Deliberation Trainers/Process Providers:** Individuals who offer training, consultation, design and facilitation of deliberative community processes to engage community members in discussing complex and challenging issues.

**Dialogue and Deliberation Organizations:** Organizations that represent networks of dialogue and deliberation practitioners, public administrators, community activists, researchers, and students, serving as gathering places, resource centers, and sources of news in the field. They champion the use of dialogue and deliberation processes, act as clearinghouses for resources and best practices, and bring people working in the field together to share information and support.

**Mediation and Conflict Resolution Organizations:** Many states have organizations that support the use of mediation and collaborative conflict resolution processes versus more traditional adversarial approaches. These organizations often provide networking opportunities for mediators, help the community access skilled mediators and facilitators, and support training and volunteer mediation programs. Some cities also have developed or have partnerships with organizations that provide neighbor-to-neighbor mediation services.

## **EQUITY ORGANIZATIONS**

These organizations serve as networks for governments working to transform their own institutions and partner with others to advance equity in various ways. They share models of effective work and help develop best practices, tools, and resources, support local and regional collaborations, and support national equity movements.

## **ONLINE TOOL PROVIDERS**

Many local governments contract with firms that have developed and support a wide range of online tools for communication and community engagement. These providers often provide training sessions for their government clients to train staff how to use the tools.

## **PEER SUPPORT NETWORKS**

Professional peer groups can provide valuable support and information to local government leaders and staff, especially those responsible for community engagement.

**Peer Groups within a Single Jurisdiction:** When community engagement staff meet and work together, they can help overcome fragmentation and increase the quality and consistency of community engagement across different departments. They can also share valuable information about the community, potential community partners, and effective strategies and techniques.

**Peer Groups Across Jurisdictions:** When local government leaders and staff from different jurisdictions meet with their peers regularly, they can share valuable resources and lessons learned and help establish expectations for good practice in the field.

**Informal Peer Groups:** Sometimes peer groups evolve organically when a few people who do similar work decide to create an ad hoc group and share their knowledge and experiences.

## **FOUNDATIONS AND FUNDING ORGANIZATIONS**

Certain philanthropic foundations have identified community engagement, participatory democracy, and community organizing as primary targets of their support and funding. These organizations often act as important convenors who help people doing similar work around the country connect with each other.

## **CIVIC ORGANIZATIONS**

National and local civic organizations encourage community engagement in civic life by bringing people together to work on important issues, community assistance, awards, events, research, and publications.

## **JOURNALS AND OTHER PUBLICATIONS**

Some journals focus on issues of civic participation and community engagement. They are invaluable resources for articles on new theories and issues, the latest trends and techniques, and case studies of successful practices. Publications by local government organizations and professional associations also publish occasional articles related to community engagement.

## **RESEARCH AND INFORMATION CLEARINGHOUSES**

Many organizations serve as sources of community engagement best practices, research, and case studies.

## **STATE AND FEDERAL AGENCY PROGRAMS**

Some state and federal agencies have programs that include community engagement requirements as part of their policies and funded projects. These agencies span a wide range of subject areas, including land use planning, transportation, public health, environmental protection, environmental justice, housing, economic development, and education. In addition to their headquarters, these agencies typically have field offices with staff who provide technical assistance and work directly with local governments and communities. While these agencies may not currently play a large role in building local government capacity for community engagement, they offer an institutionalized source of support that could have a greater impact based on staffing and funding.

In the next section, we identify providers and resources available to local government leaders and staff in Oregon.

## ***THE FIELD OF PRACTICE IN OREGON***

### **Service Providers and Resources**

In this section we identify the sources of training and support in Oregon that we discovered through our research. We use the categories of providers described in the previous section to organize the results. Given the time and resources for our project, we have highlighted Oregon providers in some of the categories, concentrating on sources of support that are available to local governments statewide (some of which originate outside the state).

This section is certainly not a directory of every provider in Oregon, a universe that includes numerous organizations, consultants, publications, and networks that help local jurisdictions build their capacity. However, we believe that this typology of providers could be the basis for a more complete and dynamic database.

The categories covered in this section:

- Community Engagement Trainers
- Local Government In-House Training
- Local Government Associations
- Councils of Governments and Regional Collaboratives
- Professional Associations
- Municipal Support Organizations
- Consulting Firms
- Academic Institutions
- Community Organizing and Advocacy Groups
- Dialogue and Deliberation Organizations
- Equity Organizations
- Online Tool Providers
- Peer Support Networks
- Foundations and Funding Organizations
- Civic Organizations
- Journals and Other Publications
- Research and Information Clearinghouses
- Federal Government Support
- Oregon State Government Support

These categories are discussed in the appendices:

- Dialogue and Deliberation Organizations (Appendix 1)
- Academic Institutions (Appendix 2)

## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT TRAINERS

We identified three organizations that are actively providing comprehensive training and support to local governments in Oregon to build their capacity for community engagement:

- International Association for Public Participation (IAP2)
- Bleiker Training
- Davenport Institute for Public Engagement and Civic Leadership

### INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

The International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) is the most well-known source of community engagement training and capacity building for local governments in Oregon.

The organization was founded in 1990 by community engagement practitioners to promote the values and best practices of community engagement.<sup>21</sup> IAP2 quickly expanded its focus to serve not only practitioners but “all people [involved] in public participation.” (<https://www.iap2.org/page/history>)

IAP2 members today “work in industry, civil society organizations, universities, government, and more.” IAP2 members support “clients, colleagues, and citizens” to improve “decision-making and promote best practice through the three IAP2 Pillars—the Core Values, Code of Ethics, and Spectrum of Public Participation. (IAP2 website Membership page: <https://www.iap2.org/page/membership>). Today, IAP2 has chapters in twenty-six countries. The IAP2 Cascade Chapter serves Oregon and southern Washington State and is one of the largest and most active IAP2 chapters in the US.

While individuals can join IAP2, they also have a “government membership” category that allows “cities, counties, regional authorities, school districts, publicly-owned utilities, state and federal agencies” to join as an organization. This membership allows all employees in the organization to access IAP2 member benefits.

IAP2 offers local governments:

- **Training and Professional Development:** Discounts for group training, participation in Skills Symposiums and conferences, and in-house training.
- **Certification:** Two levels of certification: Certified Public Participation Professional (CP3) and Master Certified Public Participation Professional (MCP3)
- **Networking:** Connections with other community engagement professionals through volunteer engagement and local and international conferences and events.
- **Recognition and Awards:** Opportunity for jurisdictions and projects to apply for one of the IAP2 Core Values Awards and international awards that recognize outstanding community engagement work.
- **Best Practices Resources and Publications:** Access to community engagement resources, learning webinars, monthly newsletters, research, and semi-annual publication of the Journal of Public Deliberation.

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<sup>21</sup> The IAP2 website “history” section states that “The [IAP2] founding members assembled a Board of Directors, developed bylaws and policies, and organized the first annual conference in Portland, Oregon in 1992. [emphasis added]. (IAP2 Website: <https://www.iap2.org/page/history>.)

- **Local Events:** Participation in local social networking opportunities, speakers and panels, and other events.
- **Career Center:** The IAP2 Career Center, which provides a way for local governments to post community engagement employment opportunities in their jurisdictions.
- **Leadership:** Opportunities to serve on the boards and committees of the IAP2 Cascade Chapter and IAP2 USA.

(Sources: <https://iap2usa.org/government> ; <https://www.iap2.org/page/about> )

IAP2 offers trainings and webinars. These can be found on the online calendars of the local IAP2 Cascade Chapter and IAP2 USA:

- IAP2 Cascade Chapter Calendar: <https://iap2usa.org/cascade>
- IAP2 USA Calendar: <https://iap2usa.org/calendar>

The flagship IAP2 training in the United States is its five-day “Foundations of Public Participation,” which provides an in-depth review of community engagement values and principles, step-by-step guidance on how to assess the need for community development and develop a community engagement plan, and a review of community engagement tools and techniques. The training includes Planning for Effective Participation (three days) and Techniques for Effective Participation (two days).

In 2019, the City of Milwaukie, Oregon sent five staff members to the IAP2 5-day foundations training as part of the City’s effort to strengthen its in-house community engagement capacity. Jordan Imlah, communications program manager for the City of Milwaukie, currently serves on the IAP2 Cascade Chapter board of directors.

Examples of other training topics on the IAP2 USA calendar in 2021 include:

- Riding the Storm: Bravely Leading in Times of Polarization and Disruption (IAP2 USA’s first online, self-paced training)
- Building a Better Future for Everyone Using Transgenerational Thinking
- Online 2-Day Course: Social Intelligence of Facilitators
- Beyond Inclusion: 8 Principles for Equitable Public Engagement
- Virtual Workshop: IAP2’s Public Participation for Decision Makers
- Strategies for Dealing with Opposition & Outrage in P2

More information about IAP2 Cascade Chapter and IAP2 USA is available at:

- IAP2 Cascade Chapter: <http://iap2usa.org/cascade>
- IAP2 USA: <https://www.iap2usa.org/>

IAP2 is currently updating its Foundations of Public Participation training to include more materials on engaging Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC) and historically underrepresented communities. Doug Zenn, with Zenn Associates in Portland, a long-time IAP2 trainer and past IAP2 USA president, is participating in the update, which is being led by IAP2 Australasia. Zenn shared that interest in IAP2 community engagement training in Australia increased significantly after the Australian government’s formal 2008 “Grand



Apology” to indigenous Australians. The apology established a vision for much greater engagement of indigenous Australians in decision making. IAP2 also has been active in Scotland, which in 2005 adopted National Standards for Community Engagement. Neither the US nor Oregon have comparable overarching policies that provide strong incentives for all local governments to effectively engage community members in decision making.

### BLEIKER TRAINING

Hans and Anna Marie Bleiker have been training local government leaders and staff in their model of community engagement—Systemic Development of Informed Consent (SDIC)—for over 30 years. Their daughter Jennifer Bleiker now has joined their firm, Bleiker Training.

The Bleikers target their trainings to both public officials and staff who are responsible for “important, but difficult-to-implement projects, programs, regulations, and missions,” especially “engineers, scientists, systems analysts, managers, administrator and other hired professionals in public agencies” because “it’s their professional work—and their careers—that are wasted when their recommendations are torpedoed.” They also target their training to elected and politically appointed decision-makers “who suffer many of the same frustrations as do professionals.”

The Bleikers assert that their SDIC approach focuses on getting community members, even those who initially strongly oppose a project, to support or at least “grudgingly go along” with the project moving forward. They recognize that community members who want to stop a project can have a lot of negative clout and therefore that “public agencies in the US have a much greater need for Consent-Building skills than their counterparts in other countries.” The Bleikers argue that people who become skilled in SDIC ultimately promote informed political decisions by connecting a more informed public to a larger decision-making framework.

The SDIC “Learning Objectives” include:

- Why and how proposals are torpedoed.
- Why technical and scientific professionals responsible for public sector missions are only as effective as they are persuasive.
- The “Technical Fallacy”—Why no amount of scientific analysis can resolve values conflicts.
- How scientific analysis needs to mesh with Systemic Consent-Building if it is to influence political debate and political decisions.
- Why Public Meetings and Advisory Committees used by most public agencies are somewhere between useless and counter productive.
- Why pleasing everyone is neither possible, necessary, or even ethical.
- Why and how you MUST satisfy this society’s concepts of Fairness, Rights, Freedoms, Liberties, and Responsibilities.

(Source: Bleiker Training website, “SDIC Training”: <https://consentbuilding.com/sdic-training/> )

The standard Bleiker training is a three-day workshop. Other training opportunities include:

- **Introductory Course:** “Dealing with NIMBY using SDIC: Earn the trust of your fiercest opponents using SDIC” (<https://consentbuilding.com/nimby/>)
- **Advanced Training—Four Modules:**

- Module 1: Strategic—How to Identify Key Issues & Interests.
- Module 2: Tactics—The DOs and DON'Ts of Outreach Tools.
- Module 3: Respect & Legitimacy —A Deep Dive Into Leadership.
- Module 4: Values —The Role of Values in Your Work.

- **Webinar Clinics:** sample topic, “Why opponents are energetic and supporters apathetic”
- **Coaching and Mentoring:** The Bleikers offer coaching and mentoring to or people who have completed the Bleiker’s Consent-Building training to help answer questions and solve problems that come up and to build a team’s skills to handle similar challenges in the future.

More information on Bleiker Training is available on their website: <https://consentbuilding.com/>.

**NOTE:**

A long-time community engagement consultant in Oregon told us that some local government leaders and staff who have completed the Bleiker training have asked that consultants assigned to their projects also be familiar with the Bleiker method of community engagement.

**DAVENPORT INSTITUTE FOR PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT AND CIVIC LEADERSHIP**

The Davenport Institute, based at Pepperdine University’s School for Public Policy, is a major source of community engagement training and capacity building in California.

Davenport works with “local governments, non-profit organizations, and residents to both promote and support constructive and broad-based civic involvement in decisions that affect people where they live and work.” (<https://publicpolicy.pepperdine.edu/davenport-institute/>). They also provide both “academic and practical support to local government practitioners, public policy students and others as it seeks to promote greater public participation in civic life.” (Davenport Strategic Plan 2019-2024)

The Davenport Institute started as Common Sense California (CSC) in 2005. In 2008, the organization offered its first half-day public engagement training program. In 2010, CSC joined Pepperdine University and became the Davenport Institute. In 2017-18, the organization launched its professional certificate program.

Davenport’s mission is “To help build stronger communities in California by promoting public participation in local governance.” Their vision is “to be a champion of public engagement as a 21st-century leadership skill for local governments and residents to succeed together.”

In early 2020, Davenport began conversations with the Center for Public Service at PSU to explore opportunities to bring their model of community engagement training to Oregon. On June 2, 2021, they hosted a sample half-day training through CPS—Effective Public Engagement Tools and Techniques—for local government elected officials and staff.<sup>22</sup>

Davenport focuses its work in three strategic areas: Thought Leadership, Convening, and Training. Davenport activities in each of these areas are described below.

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<sup>22</sup> As noted in the introduction, the conversation between CPS and DI led to a meeting in February 2020 of PSU staff and partners who study and work on community engagement. Meeting participants agreed that it would be helpful to know more about current efforts in Oregon. One outcome of that meeting is our current project to survey local government community engagement training and capacity building opportunities in the state.

## THOUGHT LEADERSHIP

- **Roadmap for Public Engagement/Formal Recognition:** A local government uses a diagnostic tool and help from a Davenport trainer to assess their jurisdiction's community engagement programs, identify strengths and weaknesses, and develop a plan to expand their community engagement work. The jurisdiction then hosts a Davenport training tailored to their jurisdiction's needs and can request further consultation.
- **Information:** Links to articles, webinars, reports and podcasts on community engagement.
- **Technological Tools:** Information on different technological tools and products for "informing residents," "consulting residents," "collaborating with residents," and "building community."
- **Additional Resources:** Links to additional resources.
- **Events:** Keynote speeches, conference sessions and other public events.
- **Research:** Research on public engagement in California, including surveys of local officials and leaders of community-based organizations on opportunities for and obstacles to community engagement.
- **Case Studies:** Case studies on community engagement efforts in different California communities.
- **Attitudes/Civic Health:** Research on attitudes toward community engagement, engagement at the state level in California, civic health and civic life in California, and other policy research.
- **Consultation:** Consultation services for local governments in California on community engagement challenges and efforts provided by DI staff and a diverse network of policy-specific consultants affiliated with DI.
- **Davenport Discussions:** A series of lunchtime events with practitioners, journalists, innovators, and researchers who speak to students at Pepperdine University on a wide range of issues.

## CONVENING

- **ICMA Student Chapter:** DI sponsors the Pepperdine University student chapter of the International City/County Managers Association (ICMA). The chapter helps students network with local government administrators and hosts panel discussions on different topics with local government practitioners.<sup>23</sup>
- **City Manager in Residence Program:** This program, developed by DI with the support of California ICMA, gives students in graduate public policy and public administration programs the opportunity to learn firsthand from some of the best city managers in California.
- **Conferences:** DI hosts conferences that bring together scholars and innovative government practitioners on community engagement, technology in government, place making, and other related fields.

## TRAINING AND CERTIFICATE PROGRAMS

Davenport recognizes that engaging community members and "meeting them where they are in relation to their community, history and culture" is an entirely different skill set from the skills local leaders traditionally have used as problem solvers and decision makers. They offer a variety of half-day and full-

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<sup>23</sup> Portland State University also hosts an active ICMA student chapter.

day training programs to help local government leaders improve their community engagement skills and two professional certification programs.

**Training:** Davenport offers half-day training programs that introduce a variety of community engagement topics, including: what community engagement is and why it is valuable; how to use technology to engage the community; how to engage communities that have been marginalized and face obstacles to participation in local decision making.

Davenport can also customize its half-day seminars and training workshops, offer full-day trainings that combine any of the half-day options, or develop customized training to meet the needs of a local government.

The standard full-day training covers the basics of good community engagement as well as valuable process design and facilitation techniques.

**Professional Certificate in Advanced Public Engagement for Local Government:** This certification program prepares mid-career local government professionals to “lead a publicly-engaged organization by gaining a deep understanding of the context, purpose, and best practices for engaging residents in the decisions that affect their lives and communities.” Davenport currently offers the program virtually to cohorts of twenty participants. It consists of five two-and-a-half hour modules held over five afternoons.

The five program modules currently include:

- Public Engagement? What? When? Why? And How?
- Technology and Public Engagement: Lessons from the Pandemic for Future Engagement
- Engaging Marginalized Communities
- How to Have Difficult Conversations
- Innovation and Leadership

The program concludes with a Personal Public Engagement Summit that “allows each participant to workshop an engagement action plan” on an issue related to their current work. Participants are matched with a DI Advisory Council Member or Certificate Alumni to talk through their engagement plan.

**Professional Certificate in Leading Smart Communities—Creating a Better Future through Emerging Technologies:** Davenport says that from “online public participation platforms to blockchain, technology is fundamentally changing the government-resident relationship. The impact of technology is felt across all departments in municipal governments—from public safety to planning.” The certification program introduces government leaders to the range of available and emerging technology platforms and how to use them.

Davenport states that the program participants will:

- Understand the context for urban and community change and how it will help you be better prepared for the opportunities and challenges ahead.
- Learn about some of the most cutting-edge developments in smart community innovation.
- Discover why cybersecurity must become a priority for every community and learn about the new information security tools and techniques.

- Explore new digital approaches to public engagement that reflect the growing expectations of communities.
- Unleash the power of government data by understanding the capabilities of emerging tools and best practices.
- Acquire new skills that will help with governance, strategy development, and rapid project deployment.
- Work together with global team members on developing and delivering a project paper over the course of the certificate program.

More information about the Davenport Institute is available at: <https://publicpolicy.pepperdine.edu/davenport-institute/>

### **LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN-HOUSE TRAINING**

It is rare for local governments anywhere to have a comprehensive, fully staffed in-house training program for community engagement. Local governments generally rely on other organizations (community partners or private vendors) to provide formal staff training, while senior staff support and mentor their colleagues. At the same time, we discovered examples of governments in Oregon that provide specific kinds of training related to community engagement for their employees, including the [City of Portland’s Equity Training](#) and the [City of Eugene’s Workforce Equity & Belonging Training](#).

### **LOCAL GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATIONS**

Local government associations are another major source of training and capacity building for local government leaders and staff in Oregon. They provide their members with a wide range of capacity building and support through conferences, workshops, webinars, mentoring, information resources, peer sharing, and award and recognition programs.

While our project team found that none of these associations appears to offer regular community engagement training to their members, we did learn that these organizations sometimes include conference sessions related to community engagement. Most of the associations offer some sort of networking and other opportunities to share best practices with other members. We also heard that local government leaders sometimes raise community engagement issues and challenges and get feedback and support from their peers through these associations.

While community engagement has not been a major focus for local government associations in Oregon, these organizations constitute a powerful infrastructure for engaging with and supporting their members. They are in a strong position to spotlight exemplary community engagement in specific jurisdictions, and they can identify the kind of information and support that would be most relevant and useful to their members.

This section describes the following local government associations and their community engagement training and capacity building activities:

- League of Oregon Cities (LOC)
- Oregon City/County Management Association (OCCMA)
- Association of Oregon Counties (AOC)
- Special Districts Association of Oregon (SDAO)

Each of these organizations is a chapter of larger national bodies (or international, in the case of OCCMA) that provide conferences, training workshops, networking, and information resources as well as additional support and information related to community engagement. This section also describes these national organizations and the resources they offer.

### LEAGUE OF OREGON CITIES

The League of Oregon Cities (LOC) provides advocacy, training, and information to support elected officials and staff in Oregon's 241 cities. LOC was created in 1925 to help local officials network and advocate on issues important to municipal governments. LOC offers some information and training related to community engagement. Additional community engagement training and information is available from the National League of Cities.

**Conferences:** LOC hosts an annual conference in the fall and a spring conference in April. They describe their conferences as "opportunities for city officials to learn best practices, network with peers and industry leaders, and take back new ideas to enhance their communities." LOC says that its Annual Conference is "the largest gathering of municipal officials each year in Oregon." The annual conference programs usually include "30+ breakout sessions, day-long seminars, workshops, tours, a 60+ vendor trade show and plenty of time for networking." The LOC 96th Annual Conference is scheduled for October 2021 in Bend, Oregon. LOC hosts its spring conferences in different regions of the state each year and tailors the conference program to include topics important to that region.

The agendas for the LOC annual conferences in 2019 and 2020 include sessions related to community engagement.

- 2019:
  - "Diversity and Inclusion in Local Government: Why, What & How"
  - "Accessibility: How to Engage All Community Members"
- 2020:
  - Keynote Speaker Walidah Imarisha, "Have You Ever Wondered Why the Black Population in Oregon is So Small?"
  - "How to Engage Diverse Leaders in Communities"
  - "How Small Cities are Approaching Equity and Inclusion"
  - "Valuing & Utilizing Your Volunteers"

**Oregon Municipal Handbook:** LOC describes its Oregon Municipal Handbook as a comprehensive resource that provides "city officials, from elected representatives to essential employees, an understanding of the purpose, structure, authority and nuances of municipal governance in Oregon." The topics covered in "Chapter 10: Working with the Public" include: public hearings and public comment, advisory groups, board and committees, neighborhood associations, volunteers, public opinion surveys, communication policies and plan, media outlets, social media and city websites, and city publications. (<https://www.orcities.org/resources/reference/city-handbook/chapter-10-working-public>)

**Training:** LOC offers training to elected city officials and city staff "on a variety of core and specialized topics." The LOC website says that training is provided by LOC and outside experts throughout the years and in a variety of locations across the state. Training topics offered by LOC staff include: Budgeting, Contracting, Ethics, Public Meetings, Public Records, Council Roles and Responsibilities, and Land Use.

Training topics offered by LOC consultants include: Coaching Great Performance, Community Visioning/Strategic Planning; Communication Strategies, Customer Service, Grant Writing, Land Use, Media Relations/Crisis Communications, and System Development Charges.

(<https://www.orcities.org/education/training/training-topics>)

One of these training programs—“Connect with Your Community: Communication Strategies that Work”— appears to include content related to community engagement. The description states that the training provides “knowledge and skills needed to establish a social media presence, build an effective working relationship with local media and encourage community involvement by promoting citizen participation.” (<https://www.orcities.org/education/training/loc-training-calendar/details/connect-with-your-communitycommunication-strategies-that-work>)

LOC also offers five Elected Essentials Training Videos. Topics include roles and responsibilities of municipal officials, public meetings, ethics, public records, legal issues. (<https://www.orcities.org/education/training/elected-essentials>)

**Local Government Management Certificate (LGMC):** LOC awards its Local Government Management Certificate to individuals “who complete 140 hours of training in 10 core areas” critical to success in local government management. One of the ten core areas is “Community Relations.” The description of this ten-hour segment says it covers “effective public meetings; community surveys; citizen involvement; and customer service.” (<https://www.orcities.org/education/lgmc>)

**Peer Sharing and Networking:** In addition to annual and spring conferences, LOC has been hosting a weekly phone call for city officials during the COVID-19 pandemic to share and discuss issues and challenges. LOC also offers networking through its Small Cities Program and its quarterly district meetings. Although these meetings were suspended for a time during COVID, the LOC calendar shows that they are being held again now.

LOC created the Small Cities Program in the early 2000’s to provide officials from smaller cities an opportunity to meet over lunch, network, and discuss issues and solutions that work for small cities in 12 regions across Oregon.

LOC notes that small cities represent more than 70 percent of all Oregon cities. Today, the program encourages elected and appointed officials from cities with populations of 7,500 or less to attend quarterly meetings in their region. These two-hour meetings include a presentation, lunch, and a roundtable discussion. All city officials in a district—even those from larger cities—are welcome to attend, as are guests from state agencies, regional and county governments, nonprofits and consulting firms. Dr. Phillip Cooper, with the Local Government Program at the Hatfield School of Government at PSU, said that these district meetings are a great way to learn about what is going on within a region and how cities are responding to the challenges they face. (<https://www.orcities.org/education/small-cities-program>)

**LOC Awards Program:** The LOC Awards Program recognizes leaders who have made outstanding contributions to their cities, and progressive and innovative city programs and projects. The Helen and Alan Berg Good Governance award honors city programs that connect community members to their governments. The LOC Civic Education Award recognizes individuals who have promoted local government education in Oregon schools. LOC awards are a good source of successful city community engagement efforts. Some examples include:

- City of Milwaukie, “All Aboard, community visioning project.” (2018)

- City of Independence, “Revitalization Project (2018)
- City of John Day, “Innovation Gateway and Riverfront Recreation Area”(2019)
- City of Cornelius, “Reach Out, Invite People In and Create a Real Community” (2019)

<https://www.orcities.org/education/conferences/annual-conference/2021-loc-awards>

**Affiliate Organizations:** LOC recognizes and works with ten affiliate organizations of local officials. The LOC website reports that several of these affiliate organizations including the Oregon Mayors Association and the Oregon City/County Management Association host conferences throughout the year that attract many LOC members. LOC provides direct staffing to:

- Oregon Mayors Association (OMA)
- Oregon City/County Managers Association (OCCMA)
- Oregon City Attorney’s Association (OCAA)
- Oregon City Planning Directors Association (OCPDA)

LOC also recognizes the Oregon Association of Municipal Recordors (OAMR), Oregon Economic Development Association (OEDA), Oregon Government Finance Officers Association (OGFOA), Oregon Association of Chiefs of Police (OACP), and the Oregon Fire Chiefs Association (OFCA). <https://www.orcities.org/about/who-we-are/affiliate-organizations>

### NATIONAL LEAGUE OF CITIES

The National League of Cities (NLC) provides information, training, and networking for local government officials in Oregon.

The NLC Resource Library offers articles, case studies, and publications related to community engagement. Some examples include:

- “The Value of Civic Engagement”
- “The Future of Civic Engagement”
- “Leaders of Today on Youth Civic Engagement”
- “Three Things Small Cities Teach Us About Civic Engagement”
- “From the Event: Complete Count to Community Investment: Establishing Permanent Civic Engagement”

#### **A National Spotlight on Oregon**

A May 2021 NLC article —“The Art of Engagement is a Journey”—highlighted effective community engagement by the City of Woodburn and Portland General Electric (PGE). The City and PGE had spent years building relationships with diverse communities, using an equity lens to guide their decision making. These relationships were extremely valuable in working with community groups to respond to damage from a severe ice storm in 2021 which downed millions of trees and cut power to thousands of people.

<https://www.nlc.org/article/2021/05/06/the-art-of-engagement-is-a-journey/>



NLC has partnered in the past with Matt Leighninger to create documents that support local government community engagement, including *Planning for Stronger Local Democracy: A Field Guide for Local Officials*. This document provides guidance and examples for local officials on how to effectively engage their communities. In the past, NLC has also established a City Futures Panel on Democratic Governance, producing the document, “Changing the Way We Govern: Building Democratic Governance in Your Community.”

NLC University (NLCU) offers courses related to local governance, including content focused on community engagement. NLC offers a [certificate program](#) that recognizes NLCU attendees for their participation in individual courses and accumulated credits. Their conferences and meetings allow local government representatives in Oregon to learn from communities across the nation.

## OREGON CITY/COUNTY MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATION

The Oregon City/County Management Association (OCCMA) membership includes individuals who are “county managers, chief administrators, assistants to city and county managers and administrators, and other consultants and academics professionally interested in local government in Oregon.” The OCCMA supports local government professional development, sharing of ideas and information, and the personal and professional development of its members. The OCCMA is a chapter of the International City/County Management Association (ICMA), which offers additional information, training, and support to local government officials in Oregon. (<https://www.occma.org/About-OCCMA>)

OCCMA holds conferences, shares information, and offers coaching and mentoring through its Senior Advisor program. The OCCMA receives staff support from the Oregon League of Cities.

**Conferences:** OCCMA holds conferences in the fall (often in collaboration with the LOC) and in the summer. OCCMA sometimes offers sessions at conferences that relate to community engagement. Recent examples include:

- “Preparing the Next Generation of Civic Leaders” (Spring 2019): A review of the innovative citizen academy model for training new community civic leaders used by the City of Hillsboro and the City of Wilsonville. The organization has since developed its [Next Generation Initiatives](#) “to attract and develop a wide and diverse group of people into the local government management profession.”
- [“Reimagining Community Engagement”](#) (Summer 2021): An examination of how community engagement may move forward after COVID stopped many traditional community engagement activities and forced local governments to “embrace new technology and ways to connect.” A panel of Oregon practitioners discussed strategies for connecting with people who might not engage through traditional methods. The session covered “the role of elected officials and changing community expectation in engagement efforts,” “ways to prioritize engagement tools on limited budgets while still adhering to the values of making engagement inclusive and accessible.” The goal of the session was to provide participants with new tools and ways of thinking about how to approach engagement in your community and strategies for addressing some of the engagement challenges.”

**Training:** OCCMA does not offer a general training program with regularly available courses. OCCMA members can access training opportunities through ICMA.

OCCMA supports the Northwest Women’s Leadership Academy (NWWLA), which offers a nine-month professional development program for emerging government leaders in Oregon and Washington. According to the OCCMA website, the program “provides opportunities to enhance skills and

competencies, build confidence, network, and expand professional connections through career mentoring and moral support to women in local government.” In 2021, session topics include: leading during a crisis; diversity, equity and inclusion; understanding your personal leadership strengths; working with a governing board; interviewing and negotiation; and process improvement. (<https://www.ocma.org/nwwla>).

**Senior Advisor Program:** OCCMA supports its members through the Senior Advisor Program (formerly called the “Range Rider” program). It offers members “the experience, advice and support of respected, retired managers of the profession.” The Senior Advisor Program is a joint activity of the ICMA and OCCMA. Currently eight senior advisors are assigned to districts across Oregon and are available to provide advice on a wide range of issues. The senior advisors regularly reach out to the city managers in their districts.

We spoke with Dave Waffle, one of the OCCMA senior advisors. Waffle said senior advisors act as counselors and mentors primarily to city managers and assistant city managers. He said they usually do not offer formal training to local governments, facilitate strategic planning processes, or provide formal consulting services. Advisors help city managers find the support they need, help them through tough times, problem solve, point them to training opportunities, help them find facilitators, and provide professional and personal guidance.

Waffle said that community engagement is just another arrow in the quiver of possible support that advisors can provide. He reported that advisors might provide information about community engagement if a city manager requests this kind of support. As an advisor, he starts by providing generic information about community engagement and what a process might look like. He asks the city manager to describe the problem and brainstorms with them on potential solutions and who their stakeholders are. Waffle said that he draws on his own experiences, networks, and situational knowledge.

**Peer Sharing:** Peer sharing occurs at the OCCMA conferences. In some counties, city managers meet regularly to discuss local issues and challenges and share successful strategies. Scott Lazenby, former city manager of the City of Lake Oswego, told us that city managers in Clackamas County get together every couple of months. We heard that city managers in Washington County also meet regularly to share ideas and support each other.

### **INTERNATIONAL CITY/COUNTY MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATION (ICMA)**

The International City/County Management Association (ICMA) website states that ICMA supports local government professionals throughout the world. The ICMA “offers membership, professional development programs, research, publications, data and information, technical assistance, and training to thousands of city, town, and county chief administrative officers, their staffs, and other organizations....” (<https://icma.org/about-icma>)

ICMA offers more community engagement resources to local government leaders and staff than any of the other local government associations.

**Conferences:** ICMA conferences are a vehicle for training, information sharing, and peer networking. ICMA holds an annual conference and regional conferences throughout the year that present sessions on a wide range of topics. The theme of the 2021 ICMA Annual Conference in Portland, Oregon is “Let’s Restart & Begin to Reimagine.” The ICMA West Coast Regional Conference in March 2021 included some community engagement and DEI sessions: “Community Engagement Tools in a Virtual World,” “Strategies to Advance Racial Equity and Reconciliation,” and “Advancing Digital Equity and Inclusion.”

**Training:** ICMA University offers training to local government leaders and managers focused on their “Practices for Effective Local Government Leadership.” Workshops and programs draw on research about fourteen “core competencies,” two of which are:

- *COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT* Ensuring and managing community involvement in local government to support good decision making
- *EQUITY AND INCLUSION* Creating an environment of involvement, respect, and connection of diverse ideas, backgrounds, and talent throughout the organization and the community (<https://icma.org/icma-university-skill-building-workshops>)

**Coaching Program:** OCCMA partners with ICMA to give Oregon local government officials access to the benefits of the ICMA Coaching Program. ICMA coaches can help with challenging personnel issues, mentor emerging leaders, help local officials continue their professional development, and allow successful local government managers to share their expertise. The Coaching Program includes: six live webinars per year; online coaching resources (videos, presentation materials, information sessions); one-on-one coaching; and articles that address career issues. (<https://icma.org/icma-coaching-program>)

One 2021 webinar topic is “Leading Your Community in an Era of Anxiety: How Do You Make Sure You Hear Them and They Hear You.” The webinar covers how to “build effective two-way communication and develop relationships” in the community “during good times” to be “better prepared to handle a crisis.” (<https://icma.org/icma-coaching-program-webinars>)

**Publications and Resources:** ICMA has the most extensive selection of online community engagement publications among the national support organizations for local governments that we examined. ICMA resources include blog posts, e-newsletters, books, research reports, and articles in Public Management (PM) Magazine.

ICMA publications include information about successful community engagement and DEI practices. For instance, they recently posted a PM Magazine article—“Engaging Our Community for an Equitable Future”—that described the deep and effective community engagement and equity work by the City of Renton, Washington. ([https://icma.org/articles/pm-magazine/engaging-our-community-equitablefuture?\\_zs=f0dsb1&\\_zl=fxrc7](https://icma.org/articles/pm-magazine/engaging-our-community-equitablefuture?_zs=f0dsb1&_zl=fxrc7))

Resources available ICMA website include:

- “Getting Everyone Aboard the Equity Train”
- “Why Diverse, Active Citizen Commissions are Important”
- “Keep Moving Forward: Shaping a More Inclusive Community”
- “Engaging Our Community for an Equitable Future” • “Difficult Conversations Lead to Stronger Communities:
- “Volunteerism in the Time of COVID-19 and Beyond”
- “How to Facilitate Inclusive Community Outreach and Engagement”
- “The Art of Community Engagement”
- “Managing Hostility in Public Discourse”

**Awards:** ICMA recognizes local government leadership through its Local Government Excellence Awards Program. Under the category for Outstanding Local Government Programs, there is an award

for Community Equity and Inclusion that recognizes communities that build and celebrate diversity and inclusiveness. (<https://icma.org/2021-local-government-excellence-awards#EQUITY>)

## ASSOCIATION OF OREGON COUNTIES

The Association of Oregon Counties (AOC) advocates on behalf of Oregon’s thirty-six counties with the state legislature, state agencies, Congress, and federal agencies. AOC provides information to counties on current trends, issues, and challenges, and provides county officials in Oregon with the opportunity to engage with each other through annual conferences and regional meetings. AOC also provides education and training to elected and appointed county officials. AOC was created in 1906 to serve as a forum for counties to share information and build consensus.

(<https://oregoncounties.org/about/history/>)

Our project team spoke with McKenzie Farrell, AOC operations manager, and Kristen Paul, public affairs associate for member services and education. Paul leads AOC’s education programming development. Farrell shared that AOC’s education efforts focus primarily on policy issues.

Farrell and Paul said that county commissioners’ interest in and opinions of community engagement vary across counties and individuals. Some commissioners are concerned that community engagement can be challenging and hard to manage. Others are more comfortable seeking out community input. Farrell said funding is a big issue for counties, and county commissioners are often interested in engaging the community to help pass bond measures and levies.

Farrell noted that more seasoned county commissioners are more likely to want to engage the community to help residents understand what counties do. For example, Deschutes County has developed a County College training program for residents to help them learn about county services and how they affect their lives. (<https://www.deschutes.org/administration/page/deschutes-county-college>)

The annual AOC conferences are major venues for training, capacity building, and networking for county commissioners. A review of the agendas for the AOC annual conferences in 2018, 2019, and 2020 identified one session, in 2020, that appeared to be related to community engagement: “Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion.”

Farrell noted that a high number of county commissioner positions have turned over recently. In response, AOC has focused its training efforts for new commissioners on fundamental issues: What is a county? Why is it important? What do counties do?

**County College:** “County College” was created by AOC in 2006 in partnership with the Oregon State University (OSU) Extension Service. AOC now offers County College every two years. The program is designed for new county commissioners and high-level county staff. The program provides a comprehensive overview of county responsibilities and the authorities of county commissioners and judges. Topics include the history and structure of county government, ethics, risk management, legal provisions, public meetings and public records, higher education programs and partnerships, AOC, the legislative process, county finance, natural resources, community development, public safety, health and human services, veterans, transportation, managing people, and leadership. At this time, community engagement is not one of the topics included in the County College curriculum.

(<https://oregoncounties.org/education/county-college/>)

**County Solutions:** County Solutions helps county leaders convene and participate in collaborative problem-solving efforts in their communities and regions. A goal of the program is to help elected officials and staff respond to issues or opportunities as they arise. Farrell said the program is patterned

after the Oregon Solutions and Regional Solutions programs. She said the scope of these projects can vary from single county issues—like a water issue in Polk County—to more complex regional issues like completion of the Oregon Coast Trail, which involves multiple counties and stakeholders. AOC staff member Andy Smith directs the program. More information on County Solutions is available at: <https://oregoncounties.org/county-solutions/>.

**Peer Networks:** Farrell and Paul noted that many conversations about best practices and problem solving happens through peer networks, such as AOC gatherings and committee meetings. AOC also works with some affiliate/associate groups of county officials, such as district attorneys, public works directors, etc. She noted that some groups are informal while others are structured. (The National Association of Counties partners with a long list of affiliate organizations as noted below.) For more information about AOC, go to: <https://oregoncounties.org/>.

### NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF COUNTIES

The National Association of Counties (NACo) provides information, convening, training, and capacity building to Oregon county leaders and staff. In addition to holding annual conferences, NACo offers county officials access to the NACo Knowledge Network which allows county officials to connect with other government partners and exchange information on a wide range of issues important to counties.

The NACo “Reports and Toolkits” section includes some materials under the heading “Civic Engagement.” One of these is “How to Gain Citizen Buy In,” which examines how counties can use messaging, social media, and other outreach strategies to engage community members on “bond proposals, budgets, and other key initiatives.”

NACo recognizes the important role counties play in building vibrant communities for all individuals, and it supports county efforts to integrate DEI objectives and initiatives into county operations. The NACo website shares examples of county DEI declarations and resolutions and county DEI committees and initiatives. No declarations or resolutions were listed from Oregon at the time of writing, but three of eleven examples of county committees are from the state:

- Clackamas County’s 2012 “Resolution Valuing, Equity and Inclusion, and the county’s support for several advisory councils including the employee-led “Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Council (EDIC).”
- Multnomah County’s “Office of Diversity and Equity” (ODE), which focuses on ensuring “access, equity, and inclusion in Multnomah County’s services policies, practices, and procedures;”
- Washington County’s convening in 2018 of a “Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) ‘Think Tank’ tasked with providing direction for the county’s DEI priorities and strategies related to human resources and procurement” and the County’s subsequent launch of a “Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Initiative focused on operationalizing racial equity across the County.” In 2020, Washington County commissioners created an Office of Equity, Inclusion and Community Engagement in the County Administrative Office and a Chief Equity Office position to support the County’s efforts to “foster equity and inclusion in the county’s programs, practices and policies.” (<https://www.naco.org/county-resources-diversity-equity-and-inclusion#committee-initatives>)

NACo also has formal relationships with many organizations with different roles in county governance. NACo lists seven “affiliated organizations” that offer additional opportunities for local elected officials to find peer support, including national associations for Black, Hispanic, Republican, Democratic, Women county officials and LGBT leaders and allies. NACo also recognizes twenty-five “Affiliate organizations” that are aligned with county departments. These include national associations for county administrators, health officials, park and recreation officials, planners, information officers, sheriffs,

engineers, and more. Some of these organizations may offer additional opportunities to develop tailored community engagement training for their members. Our project did not explore what role these national organizations might play in Oregon or what information or training they may provide to their members related to community engagement. (<https://www.naco.org/about/committees-state-associations-and-affiliates>) For more information on NACo, go to: (<https://www.naco.org/>).

### **SPECIAL DISTRICTS ASSOCIATION OF OREGON**

Special districts are another important form of local government in Oregon. About 1,000 special districts provide a wide range of services to local communities across the state and to nearly every Oregonian. Of these, 920 are members of the Special Districts Association of Oregon (SDAO). SDAO provides a wide range of training and support to its member districts.

The SDAO was formed in 1979 to “give special districts a stronger and united voice” with the Oregon Legislature. SDAO advocates with state agencies and other levels of government and provides training, information sources, and other support services to its members. (<https://www.sdao.com/about-specialdistricts-association-of-oregon>)

Special districts come in all sizes. Frank Stratton, SDAO executive director, noted that special districts can range from a small road district that serves 20 people to a large organization with significant staff and resources. He estimated that about thirty special districts in Oregon have budgets of over \$10 million, a couple hundred have budgets over \$1 million, and about 450 have little or no staff and budgets under \$100,000. SDAO reports that special districts in Oregon are led by more than 4,350 locally elected or volunteer board members.

In many parts of Oregon, special districts provide critical public services to residents. Stratton gave the example of Curry County, which has three small cities, but where everyone else in the county gets their services from almost sixty special districts.

#### **Thirty-Three types of Special District in Oregon**

Airport, Cemetery Maintenance, County Service, Diking, Domestic Water Supply, Drainage, Emergency Communication, Fire Protection, Geothermal Heating, Health, Heritage, Highway Lighting, Irrigation, Library, Mass Transit, Metropolitan Service, Park and Recreation, People’s Utility, Ports, Predator Control, Radio and Data, 9-1-1 Communications, Road Assessment, Sand Removal, Sanitary, Soil and Water Conservation, Special Road, Transportation, Vector Control, Water Control, Water Improvement, Weather Modification, Weed Control.

(<https://www.sdao.com/what-is-a-special-district>)

SDAO supports special districts with training, information, and other support programs. SDAO’s training and capacity building activities include annual conferences and regional gatherings, training on risk management and personnel management, and general consulting support from SDAO staff.

**Training Opportunities:** The SDAO “Trainings Guide” lists the many different training opportunities available to special district boards on request. Most topics focus on risk management, including employment practices, health and safety, buildings and property, and transportation. SDAO also offers training on human resources and legal issues. Stratton noted that many individuals elected to special district boards may not be familiar with their new leadership role and responsibilities. SDAO Board Training topics include “The Board as ‘Supervisor,” “Board Duties, Responsibilities, and Liabilities,”

“Making Executive Director Performance Evaluation Meaningful,” and “Confidence in the Face of Confusion.” SDAO also offers monthly “First Thursday Webinars” to its members.

(<https://www.sdao.com/files/2de44b78b/18-trainings.pdf>)

Stratton shared that SDAO staff currently do not have specific expertise in community engagement and do not provide training or consulting support for special districts on community engagement. He noted that greater support for special districts on how to engage their communities would be valuable.

Unlike cities and counties, which may provide many different public services, special districts usually provide a single service, often of a technical nature. Stratton noted that an individual’s interest in a special district is generally related to accessing the service the district provides, the cost of the service for that person, interest in supporting the service or volunteering, and sometimes running for the board.

**Reasons Special Districts Engage the Community:** Special districts generally are not required to engage their communities beyond the formal requirements for public meetings. Stratton said that a major reason special district board members engage their communities is to assess and then build community support to pass a bond measure to fund the district’s work. Another major challenge is getting people to run for and serve on special district boards. Stratton observed that many special districts operate in rural areas where some boards are largely made up of older white men. He suggested that many boards would benefit from learning how to effectively broaden their outreach to attract a greater diversity of board membership, especially by age and gender, and often from the local Latino community.

Stratton noted that special districts need to raise basic awareness in their communities about the district’s existence, purpose, and the value it brings to the community. He said this greater community awareness can help districts when they seek support to pass a bond measure, when a crisis occurs, or to encourage people to run for the board. He emphasized that special districts also need to raise awareness among government leaders at the state and federal levels about what they do and why they need funding.

Some special districts have strong community outreach programs focused on informing their residents and getting them to change their behavior (for example, to promote fire prevention and water conservation, or what not to flush down your toilet).

Stratton echoed a theme we heard from many others we interviewed—the importance of local government leaders and staff developing relationships in the community before a crisis breaks out. Stratton noted that the amount of community engagement a special district does often depends on available resources and capacity. He said that special districts with larger staff and budgets tend to do more community engagement. He suggested examples of districts to look at that are doing good community engagement that include:

- Tualatin Hills Park and Recreation (<http://www.thprd.org/>)
- Tualatin Valley Fire and Rescue (<https://www.tvfr.com/>)
- Tualatin Valley Water District (<https://www.tvwd.org/>)
- Rogue Valley Sewer Services (<https://www.rvss.us/>)
- Port of Tillamook (<https://potb.org/#>)

**List of Consultants:** Consultants can be an important source of community engagement support for special districts. Stratton said SDAO staff currently do not have the expertise to provide community engagement advice and guidance to its member districts. Stratton said SDAO is developing a “Consulting

Connections” website to help special districts find consultants to work with. To be listed on the website, consultants would have to show letters of support from local governments they had worked with successfully in the past and offer some type of discount or benefit to SDAO members to be included on the list. Stratton said SDAO’s tax-exempt status does not allow the organization to formally endorse individual consultants.

**On-Call Consultants:** Stratton also shared that SDAO is exploring creating an on-call list of consultants that do public relations work. SDAO could enter into a sponsorship agreement so that special districts could access those companies for consulting advice on outreach and especially providing information to their communities and strategies, including social media, for building support for local bond measure campaigns. Stratton referenced the firm, Winning Mark, as an example of a public relations firm that does this kind of work.

**Peer Sharing:** Peer sharing is another source of information and sharing of best practices for special districts. Stratton said that SDAO works with formal and informal peer groups of special district professionals. For instance, SDAO supports networks for human relations managers, special district attorneys, and water and sanitary professionals. SDAO also directly manages a peer group for port directors. He said no such group exists for special district public relations staff.

**Beyond Oregon:** Unlike for cities, counties, and city/county managers, no national association of special districts exists to provide another layer of support to these agencies in Oregon. Stratton shared that a few years ago SDAO joined with statewide special district associations in California, Utah, Colorado, and Florida to create the National Special Districts Coalition to share experiences and increase the visibility and clout of special districts in Congress. As other states join the coalition it could become a source of community engagement information, training, and support for special districts in the future. (National Special Districts Coalition, <https://www.nationalspecialdistricts.org/home>)

Further exploration of the kind of community engagement training that would be most helpful to special districts would be valuable. This could include the development of case studies and best practices relevant to the specific work of special districts and guidance on how to access and work with consulting firms to engage community members. SDAO’s annual conferences and regional meetings also offer an opportunity to provide community engagement information and training to SDAO members.

For more information on SDAO, go to: <https://www.sdao.com/>

## **COUNCILS OF GOVERNMENTS AND REGIONAL COLLABORATIVES**

We did not research the community engagement activities and capacity of all these organizations, but we recommend that any further efforts to catalog community engagement activities and capacity in Oregon consider them as well.

### **COUNCILS OF GOVERNMENTS**

Oregon is home to seven regional councils of governments (COGs). It is also home to Metro, the regional government covering the Portland metropolitan area.<sup>24</sup> COGs are multi-jurisdictional and multipurpose organizations. They are voluntary associations of local governments that work together on issues that cross jurisdictional boundaries. COGs provide a variety of services and support to their jurisdictional members and direct services to residents in the communities they serve.

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<sup>24</sup> Metro is the only directly elected regional government and MPO in the United States.



Our project did not explore community engagement training and capacity building by COGs, but we recognize their significance in promoting collaborative governance. Dr. Phillip Cooper noted that the PSU Local Government Program's Civic Gaps Project is working with COGs and local governments to identify needs and available services.

(We saw a reference to an organization called Oregon Regional Councils Association, which apparently was created in 1984 by ORS Chapter 190, but we were not able to find any information about this organization or its activities.)

Oregon's seven COGs include:

### **Central Oregon Intergovernmental Council (COIC)**

The COIC was designated as a COG in 1972. The COIC website says that the organization provides services to "counties of Crook, Deschutes and Jefferson, the cities of Bend, Culver, La Pine, Madras, Metolius, Prineville, Redmond and Sisters, as well as the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs." The COIC has more than 100 employees and provides services that include: "employment and training, alternative high school education, business loans, transportation, and community and economic development."

### **Lane Council of Governments (LCOG)**

LCOG was first organized in 1945 and is one of the oldest councils of governments in the nation. The organization became a formal COG in 1971. LCOG's member organizations include "Lane County, twelve cities, six school districts, one education district, one college, two parks and recreation organizations, three library districts, three utilities, a transit district, two fire districts, an ambulance district, and a port." LCOG serves as a regional forum to support "regional planning, coordination, program development and service delivery organizations in local communities across Lane County."

LCOG services include Senior and Disability Services, Planning and Development Services, Administrative Services, GIS and Data Services, Local Government Personnel Services, Regional Technology Services, Transportation, Metropolitan Planning, Business Loans, Community Safety and Metro Television. LCOG also recently became the host for the Local Government Personnel Institute (LGPI), which provides personnel and labor relations support services to local governments across Oregon.

### **Mid-Willamette Valley Council of Governments (MWVCOG)**

According to the MWVCOG website, intergovernmental cooperation in the mid-Willamette Valley began in 1957. MWVCOG was formally established in 1971. Their mission is to "expand interaction and improve dialogue among local units of government," "enhance collective awareness of major regional issues through seminars and workshops," "coordinate regional planning and development activities," and "provide technical assistance and local services tailored to individual needs of member governments."

In 2021, MWVCOG members include thirty-three cities, three counties, the Confederated Tribes of the Grand Ronde, and seven special districts. MWVCOG supports its members in community development and planning, transportation planning, economic development, housing rehabilitation, small business financing, Census services, and GIS services.

### **Northwest Senior and Disability Services (NWSDS)**

NWSDS was created in 1982 and delivers services to seniors and adults with physical disabilities. NWSDS serves seniors and people with disabilities in Clatsop County, Marion County, Polk County, Tillamook County and Yamhill County.

### Oregon Cascades West Council of Governments

OCWCOG serves Linn, Benton, and Lincoln Counties and cities within those counties, the Confederated Tribes of the Siletz Indians, and the Port of Newport. OCWCOG services include a variety of programs in the areas of senior and disability services, community services, business services and community development, economic development, and transportation.

### Rogue Valley Council of Governments

RVCOG was established in 1968 to serve local jurisdictions in Jackson and Josephine Counties. Today, RVCOG members include Jackson and Josephine Counties, thirteen cities—Ashland, Butte Falls, Cave Junction, Central Point, Eagle Point, Gold Hill, Grants Pass, Jackson, Medford, Phoenix, Rogue River, Shady Grove, and Talent, and eight special districts and educational entities—Emergency Communications of Southern Oregon (ECISO 911), Jackson County Library Services, Jackson Soil and Water Conservation District, Rogue Community College, Rogue Valley Sewer Services (RVSS), Southern Oregon Regional Economic Development Inc (SORED) and Rogue Valley Transportation District (RVTD).

RVCOG provides programs and direct services in the areas of senior and disability services, transportation planning, land use planning, community development and natural resources and provides a variety of administrative support services to its member jurisdictions.

### **REGIONAL COLLABORATIVES**

Oregon has a rich history of local communities and jurisdictions joining together to solve regional problems. These regional collaboratives are another form of public action and decision making that can showcase innovative and effective community engagement practices that could be useful to local government leaders and staff in Oregon.

Emerson and Nabatchi (2015) define “collaborative governance” as “the processes and structures of public policy decision making and management that engage people across the boundaries of public agencies, levels of government, and/or the public, private, and civic spheres to carry out a public purpose that could not otherwise be accomplished.” (Oregon Atlas of Collaboration, p. 2)

In our interviews, we heard about a particular example of good collaboration and community engagement—the Central Oregon Health Council. We also discovered the Oregon Atlas of Collaboration, which describes 236 different collaboratives in Oregon.

### Central Oregon Health Council

Matt Leighninger pointed us to the work of the Oregon Health Council. Leighninger said his national organization, Public Agenda, had worked with the Council and that it is a good example of how collaborative and community-focused work can be done in smaller, rural communities.

The Central Oregon Health Council (COHC) was created in 2009 to allow Crook, Jefferson, and Deschutes counties to partner on transforming their local health care delivery systems. The COHC website states that the organization’s purpose is to “improve health care by bringing down costs and raising both quality and satisfaction.” The organization seeks to “create a space for the health partners in the region to work together.” In addition to working with doctors, dentists and hospitals the organization states that it works with “school districts, public transportation, housing groups, politicians, and many more.” COHC says that they “bring patients, providers, and leaders together to solve problems. Our 200 volunteers have made our mission a success. Together we are making a healthier Central Oregon.” COHC’s Community Advisory Committee includes representation from Oregon Health Plan (OHP) members and other representatives of Community, Tribal, and County governments.

## The Atlas of Collaboration: Oregon Volume, Version 1.0

The Oregon Atlas of Collaboration provides information about 236 collaborative efforts throughout the state. The Atlas is a joint project of the National Policy Consensus Center at PSU and the Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs Program for the Advancement of Research on Conflict and Collaboration at Syracuse University.

About half the collaborations in the Atlas were initiated by local communities and coalitions and about half were formed as a result of state government incentives or mandates. About 66 percent of the collaboratives focus on delivering public services, while 34 percent were formed to resolve some form of conflict. The Atlas reports that more “than 2,500 people and 2,000 organizations participate in these collaboratives.”

The Atlas describes collaboratives that span five policy areas: natural resources, economic development, public safety, education, and human health. The following table from the Atlas lists different types of collaborative organizations within each policy area.

| POLICY AREA COLLABORATIVE PLATFORM        | NUMBER OF COLLABORATIVES | SUPPORTING AGENCY (IES)                                    |
|---|--------------------------|--|
| <b>HEALTH</b>                             |                          |  |
| Coordinated Care Organizations            | 15                       | OR Health Authority  |
| Regional Health Equity Coalitions         | 4                        | OR Health Authority  |
| <b>NATURAL RESOURCES</b>                  |                          |  |
| Watershed Councils                        | 66                       | OR Watershed Enhancement Board                             |
| Forest Collaboratives                     | 25                       | OR Department of Forestry & OR Watershed Enhancement Board |
| Focused Investment Partnerships           | 18                       | OR Watershed Enhancement Board                             |
| Resource Advisory Councils                | 6                        | US Bureau of Land Management                               |
| Place-based Water Planning                | 4                        | OR Water Resources Department                              |
| <b>EDUCATION</b>                          |                          |  |
| Regional Achievement Collaboratives       | 13                       | OR Chief Education Office                                  |
| Early Learning Hubs                       | 16                       | OR Department of Education                                 |
| STEM Hubs                                 | 13                       | OR Chief Education Office                                  |
| <b>ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT</b>               |                          |  |
| Regional Solutions Committees             | 11                       | OR Governor’s Office                                       |
| Local Workforce Development Boards        | 9                        | OR Workforce and Talent Development Board                  |
| <b>PUBLIC SAFETY</b>                      |                          |  |
| Local Public Safety Coordinating Councils | 36                       | OR Criminal Justice Commission                             |
| <b>TOTAL</b>                              | <b>236</b>               |  |

(Source: Oregon Atlas of Collaboration, p. 3)

The Atlas is a valuable source of possible case studies on effective community engagement by collaboratives in Oregon. The authors of the Atlas recommend that the next version be expanded to include the many collaborations in Oregon supported by Oregon Solutions and Oregon Consensus.

## TRIBAL GOVERNMENTS

Oregon's nine federally recognized tribes can be important partners for local governments and government collaboratives in Oregon. The federally recognized tribes in Oregon include: Burns Paiute of Harney County; Confederated Tribes of Coos, Lower Umqua and Siuslaw Indians; Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde; Confederated Tribes of Siletz; Confederated Tribes of Umatilla Reservation; Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs; Cow Creek Band of Umqua Indians; Coquille Indian Tribe; and Klamath Tribes.

While it was beyond the scope of our project to study local government engagement with tribal governments, we did identify some resources for local governments, including:

- **PSU Institute for Tribal Government/Certificate Program:** The Institute for Tribal Government is a program of the Center for Public Service at Portland State University. The Institute's mission is to "support Tribes and Indigenous communities as well as assisting government, industry, non-profit, and academic partners whose work impacts Indian Country through customized trainings and technical assistance." The Institute's Professional Certificate in Tribal Relations offers participants, including local government leaders and staff, the opportunity to build their capacity to work effectively with Tribal governments and communities. For more information on the Institute and the Certificate Program go to: <https://www.pdx.edu/tribal-government/>
- **City of Portland Annual Tribal Relations Program/Annual Summit:** In 2017, the City of Portland hired its first full-time tribal liaison, Laura John. John helped create the City's Tribal Relations Program to promote "culturally grounded, long-term, positive relationships and decision-making processes through government-to-government engagement with Tribal governments and the urban American Indian/Alaska Native community." The program "advises City bureaus and Council offices on outreach to, and interactions with, Tribal governments and the urban Indian community" and "fields requests and inquiries from Tribes and community members about engagement with the city." (<https://www.portlandoregon.gov/ogr/79304>) In 2018, the program hosted the first annual Tribal Nations Summit. The summit brought together Tribal and City elected leaders and provided a day-long training for more than 100 City employees.

We recommend future work to identify and document examples of how local governments are working with Tribal governments to engage their communities in decisions that affect them.

## PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS

These groups support specific groups of local government professionals: public works directors, land use planners, transportation planners, utility engineers, local health professionals, emerging leaders, and others. These associations offer conferences, workshops, events, continuing education, certification programs, peer networking, mentoring, regular communications, legislative and policy tracking, career support, and recognition and awards for exceptional work.

These organizations are powerful vehicles for sharing community engagement training and capacity building with their members. We did not examine the full range of local government professional associations in Oregon, focusing on these within the state:

- Engaging Local Government Leaders (ELGL)
- The American Planning Association (APA) and its Oregon Chapter (OAPA)

## ENGAGING LOCAL GOVERNMENT LEADERS

Engaging Local Government Leaders (ELGL) describes itself as an “accidental professional association” founded in Portland, Oregon in 2012.<sup>25</sup> ELGL has grown to “over 4800 members from all 50 states plus Canada, UK, Israel, and Australia.” It focuses on “all levels of local government (from analysts to mayors, librarians to planners, and everyone in between). ELGL seeks to “engage the brightest minds in local government by providing timely and relevant content through podcasts, blogs, webinars, social media, learning cohorts and conference gatherings” to foster “authentic and meaningful connections that are grounded in practices of equity and inclusion.”

ELGL offers information and resources on many aspects of local government work. They post on many topics related to community engagement, including open government programs and strategies, accessibility during COVID, and social media strategies.

ELGL highlights its partnership with the Davenport Institute. In 2021, ELGL and Davenport partnered on a five-part webinar series that explored how “local leaders have maintained connection over the past year and what lessons can be applied moving forward.” (<https://elgl.org/webinar-rewind-meeting-publicaccess-obligations/>)

Examples of ELGL webinars related to community engagement:

- **Making Creative Resident Engagement “Business as Usual” (September 2019)**: This webinar, hosted by the Davenport Institute, looked at “different strategic approaches three communities [Camarillo, Morgan Hill, Riverside] are taking to build public engagement into their business as usual.”
- **Building Community and Rebuilding Connections (May 2021)**: This webinar recognized that “even at the best of times, authentic, inclusive, and effective public engagement looks very different from traditional, 3-minutes-at-a-microphone, public comment.” It explored “creative ways local leaders are investing in building community in the midst of this crisis so that their communities can come out stronger than ever on the other side.”
- **The Future of Public Engagement in a Hybrid World (July 2021)**: The webinar, organized in collaboration with the Davenport Institute, IAP2, ILG, and Cal-ICMA, is “an open dialogue for anyone leading, managing, or facilitating public participation process and input in this transition from a pandemic to post COVID-19 reality.” (<https://elgl.org/event/webinar-the-future-of-public-engagementin-a-hybrid-world/>)

For more information on ELGL go to: <https://elgl.org/>.

## OREGON CHAPTER OF THE AMERICAN PLANNING ASSOCIATION

Community engagement plays a strong role in land use planning in Oregon. As described in more detail below, Oregon State Planning Goal 1 (Citizen Involvement) requires cities and counties to involve community members in the development of their state-mandated comprehensive plans.

The Oregon Chapter of the American Planning Association (OAPA) offers resources to local government planners, including conferences, webinars, training, networking opportunities, awards, and recognition. Our project team talked with Aaron Ray, OAPA president, and Susan Millhauser, OAPA program and policy coordinator.

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<sup>25</sup> ELGL’s original name was “Oregon Emerging Local Government Leaders Network.”

Ray emphasized that good community engagement is a core tenet of the planning profession and part of the AICP Code of Ethics. He noted that it can be challenging for planners and elected officials to work together to implement the Code, and that planners would benefit from training about how to do this effectively.

He suggested that formal obligations to engage the community in planning should be strengthened in Oregon. The OAPA is on record [supporting revisions](#) to State Planning Goal 1, advocating outcome-based standards similar to other statewide planning goals as part of the Oregon Administration Regulations (OARs).

Ray said that “imitation is the highest form of planning” and stressed the value of planners learning from each other’s successes and failures. Sharing examples is vital to improving practice in this field.

Ray and Millhauser emphasized the importance of using demographic data to determine who is in the community and how to reach community members. Many local governments appreciate the value of community relationships and partnerships, but this is clearly an area of opportunity for training targeted to planners.

OAPA activities that support community engagement include:

**Conferences:** OAPA holds annual conferences that often feature sessions related to community engagement and DEI. In 2020, OAPA partnered with APA Washington to hold a virtual conference attended by over 450 planning practitioners from around the country. It included several sessions and a keynote panel related to community engagement. They included:

- [Racial Equity in Urban Placemaking](#): Learn how racism manifests itself in urban planning and begin to understand how to embed racial equity in the practice of placemaking.
- [Telling the Story - Engaging Community Online](#): Hear how City of Eugene transportation planners have been getting creative with Facebook Live, hosting speakers and events during May Bike Month to keep the positive energy flowing as much as possible.
- [From Healthy Places to Inclusive Communities](#): This session delves into planning, engagement, and implementation strategies and how a focus on people and holistic interventions can improve outcomes for marginalized groups and entire communities.
- [Leading with Equity in Climate Planning](#): This session aims to share the innovative participatory planning approach utilized for the 2020 SCAP, discussing how and why frontline and BIPOC communities should have a leadership role in climate planning processes.
- [Inclusive Engagement - Crossing the Digital Divide](#): Hear insights on best practices when engaging the public in socially distant ways.
- [Shaping the Public Realm in Oregon’s Small Towns](#): Learn how the cities of Lowell, Wilsonville, and Coburg worked with their communities to plan for a public realm that would achieve the triple bottom line using three different methods.
- [Cake Day and Crowdsourcing - Innovative outreach approaches to overcome place-based challenges](#): This interactive moderated panel presents three speakers, working as one team across three different geographies, with brief case studies of innovative public outreach approaches that were used to overcome place-based challenges.
- [Closing Keynote Panel](#): Keynote speakers Professor Angela Addae, J.D., Ph.D. and Secretary Roger Millar FAICP, FASCE, facilitated by Anita Yap (Multicultural Collaborative). Conversation will touch on

conference highlights and delve into themes such as the new world of planning, community development and engagement in light of the pandemic; reflections on finding climate justice; and equitable and resilient community rebuilding in the wake of the recent wildfires.

**Webinars:** Ray said the OAPA organizes and hosts webinars throughout the year, some of which relate to community engagement. OAPA is a member of the Planning Webcast Consortium which hosts 90-minute webinars nearly every week produced by various APA divisions and chapters around the country. Some webinars related to community engagement include:

- **“Opening Doors and Minds: Planning and Running Virtual Open Houses”** (OAPA, April 2021)
- **“Harnessing the Power of Community Feedback with a Qualitative Methodology”** (APA Massachusetts, January 2021)
- **“Anti-racist Planning Practice: An Indigenous Perspective”** (OAPA, December 2020)

**OAPA News Blog and DEI Library:** The OAPA News Blog includes articles written by practicing planners and academic researchers. Ray and Millhauser shared that OAPA is creating a “DEI Library” that will be available to planners and local officials.

**Planners Network Meetings:** Ray noted that OAPA and the Oregon State Department of Land Conservation and Development (DLCD) coordinate meetings of the Planners Network Meetings Program. The program offers locally focused, one or two-day events around the state. According to the OAPA website, “Meetings offer professional development, including CM credits, for professional planners as well as networking opportunities.” The website adds that, “Many meetings include training specifically designed for Planning Commissioners and community members seeking to learn more about Oregon’s planning program, and planning issues more generally.”

Ray and Millhauser said some of these meetings touch on community engagement. For instance, a Planner Network meeting in Fall 2020 was hosted by the City of Cornelius. Then Planning Director Ryan Wells showcased the City’s award-winning Cornelius Town Center Plan and the community engagement for the plan, which included outreach to the Spanish-speaking community, local non-profits, and trusted community leaders. Community members served as panelists at the meeting and talked about their work with the City to engage their communities.

(<https://oregon.planning.org/events/plannersnetwork/>)

**Planning Commissioner Support:** Ray and Millhauser shared that OAPA and DLCD collaborate to train and support local government planning commissioners. This support includes planning commissioner trainings at Planners Network meetings around the state each year. OAPA and DLCD also updated the Planning Commissioner Handbook in 2015. The handbook has descriptions of planning values and principles, planning processes, roles and responsibilities, and how to engage the community in decision making. (<https://oregon.planning.org/knowledge/planningcommissioner/>)

**Community Assistance Planning Program:** OAPA’s Community Assistance Planning Program (CAPP) brings the planning expertise of volunteer planners to communities that otherwise would not be able to access these services. The volunteer planners hold workshops to help communities face planning challenges and develop practical recommendations. The program is designed to “strengthen the ability of community members to influence or determine decisions that affect their quality of life.” OAPA states that “CAPP workshops seek to foster community education and civic engagement.” Ray and Millhauser said that Deb Meihoff, principal with the planning and community engagement firm Communitas LLC, leads the CAPP program for OAPA.

**Oregon Planners Network Listserv:** The Oregon Planners Network (OPN) Listserv allows planners throughout Oregon to ask questions and share information on planning topics. OAPA does not manage this listserv (it is hosted by the University of Oregon), but they consider it a valuable resource for planners in Oregon.

**Awards and Recognition:** Each year, OAPA honors outstanding planning work and leaders through its award program. One category is the “Public Involvement and Participation” award, which “recognizes projects, programs, practices or tools that go the extra distance to innovate and cultivate meaningful discourse and positively impact community quality of life, with a focus on reaching communities that have traditionally been underrepresented.” Recent awards for excellence in community engagement include:

- City of Cornelius: Town Center Plan (2019)
- City of Wilsonville: Town Center Vision Process (2018)
- City of Milwaukie and Cogan Owens Green: Milwaukie All Aboard! Community Vision (2017)
- City of Astoria Parks and Recreation: Comprehensive Master Plan (2016)
- City of West Linn: Arch Bridge-Bolton Concept Plan (2015)

[\(https://oregon.planning.org/community/awards/history/\)](https://oregon.planning.org/community/awards/history/)

### **AMERICAN PLANNING ASSOCIATION**

The American Planning Association (APA) offers resources related to community engagement that are available to government leaders and staff in Oregon.

**Conferences:** The APA holds annual conferences. The 2020 virtual annual conference included some sessions related to community engagement, including:

- “Inclusive Engagement Strategies”
- “Applying Inclusive Engagement Techniques Beyond Translated Communications”
- “From Community Trauma to Ferguson’s Comprehensive Plan”
- “Engagement for Everyone: Accessible Virtual Strategies”

**Training:** APA offers an extensive catalog of online courses taught by planning experts through its APA Learn program. Some of these courses focus on community engagement and DEI.

[\(https://learn.planning.org/catalog/\)](https://learn.planning.org/catalog/) Examples include:

- “Equity-Driven Planning in Three Cities”
- “Inclusive Engagement: Innovative City Approaches”
- “On the Front Lines of Equitable Placemaking”
- “Addressing Cultural Divides”
- “Diversity and Inclusion Training Series”
- “Engagement Techniques for Latino Communities”

**Awards:** In recent years, some Oregon community planning efforts have won national APA awards for outstanding work in planning:



- **Umatilla Together: Framework Plan (2018):** A team of PSU students worked with the City of Umatilla to develop a community vision to connect and enhance Umatilla’s existing assets around the downtown corridor. “The team engaged Umatilla residents by holding a kick-off event, interviewing community leaders, hosting a business mixer, forming a stakeholder advisory committee, organizing a Latino focus group, and surveying Umatilla’s youth to see what kinds of activities they want in their community.” The students and their PSU faculty advisors were recognized at the 2018 National Planning Conference in New Orleans. (<https://www.pdx.edu/news/psu-student-team-wins-nationalplanning-award-umatilla-together-framework-plan>)
- **City of Lake Oswego: “We Love Lake Oswego” video (2013):** City planners created this video to help community members see the value of planning and the City’s comprehensive plan. ([https://www.oregonlive.com/lake-oswego/2013/01/we\\_love\\_lake\\_oswego\\_video\\_wins.html](https://www.oregonlive.com/lake-oswego/2013/01/we_love_lake_oswego_video_wins.html))
- **City of Newberg: Design Star Program (2013):** The City of Newberg Design Star Program won an APA National Planning Excellence Award for Public Outreach for its Design Star Program in 2013. The program “prompts sixth grade students to think critically about community planning.” The program was created by city planners in response to an APA initiative that asked local planners to engage young people. (<https://www.newberg.k12.or.us/district/news-design-start-wins-national-planningaward>)

## **MUNICIPAL SUPPORT ORGANIZATIONS**

Municipal services and research organizations in some states offer important information, training, and support to local governments. Washington and California both have organizations that play this role. While these organizations provide support in many different policy areas, they also provide resources related to equity and community engagement on their websites. Local governments in Oregon can access and download much of this information without being members of these organizations.

At this time, Oregon does not have a full-service local government support organization like those in Washington and California. Oregon does have the Local Government Personnel Institute, housed at the Lane Council of Governments, which provides human resources and labor relations support to cities, counties and special districts in Oregon. Dr. Phillip Cooper, head of the Local Government Program at the Hatfield School of Government at PSU, shared with us that he is working with local government leaders to advocate for the creation of a full-service local government support organization in Oregon. If this organization were created, it could become a valuable source of community engagement information, resources, and support that is tailored to the needs and experiences of local communities in Oregon.

This section describes:

- Municipal Research and Services Center (Washington)
- Institute for Local Government (California)
- Local Government Personnel Institute (Oregon)
- Efforts to create a local government support organization in Oregon

## MUNICIPAL RESEARCH AND SERVICES CENTER (WASHINGTON)

The [Municipal Research and Service Center](#) (MRSC) provides legal advice and policy guidance to local governments across Washington State. MRSC serves all 281 cities and towns in Washington, all 39 counties, and hundreds of special purpose districts, state agencies, and other government partners.

The MRSC originally was created in 1934 as the University of Washington Bureau of Governmental Research. MRSC became a private non-profit organization in 1969. MRSC reports that its staff attorneys, policy consultants and financial experts help local government “staff and elected officials research policies, comply with state and federal laws, and improve day-to-day operations.”

MRSC provides support on a very wide selection of policy areas. The MRSC website identifies the most popular topics as: Coronavirus, Public Records Act, Open Public Meetings Act, Purchasing and Contracting, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, and Overtime and Comp Time. The MRSC also provides guidance and support on: Economic Development, Environment, Finance, Governance, Legal, Management, Parks and Recreation, Personnel, Planning, Public Safety, Public Works and Utilities, and Transportation.

MRSC’s resources related to community engagement appear under the heading “Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Resources for Local Governments.” MRSC presents its support for community engagement in the context of local governments efforts to advance equity and building inclusive communities.

MRSC equity and community engagement resources include:

**DEI Training and Support:** Resources to support local governments access training and support for facilitated conversations for staff and elected officials to help build a common language and understanding of race equity concepts across their organizations.

- MRSC blog post on advancing equity

**Cultures Connecting:** DEI Facilitator and Consultant Directory provides contact information for trainers and consultants in the following areas: Facilitators/Consultants, Coaching/Consultants, Organization Consultants, Out-of-State Facilitators/Consultants, and Civil Rights Attorneys Specializing in Discrimination.

- Cultures Connecting: DEI Facilitator and Consultant Directory (<https://mrsc.org/getmedia/dce11774671a-4e9a-8db0-674e791ab3a2/Facilitator-Consultant-Directory.aspx>)

**Inclusion Statements:** Examples of official statements from different local governments in Washington that reinforce the jurisdiction’s commitment to “acceptance, equal treatment, and safety for everyone.”

**DEI-Related Data Collection and Analysis:** Examples of local government assessments that identify successful DEI practices, and ensure local governments are making data-informed decisions to improve access to opportunity for all community members.

**Community-Based Advisory Committees:** Examples of local government advisory committees, commissions, and task forces focused on building bridges with local communities.

**Inclusive Public Engagement Initiatives:** Examples of local government programs and plans to increase community outreach and engagement. Examples include outreach strategies, plans, and policies.

**Inclusive Hiring and Contracting Policies:** Examples of local government plans to address long-term structural issues that disenfranchise people based on race, ethnicity, ability, or sexual orientation.

**Strategic Plans:** Examples of local government strategic plans to advance human resources goals, service delivery, and development projects.

**Equity Tools:** Examples of local government equity tools.

**Additional Equity and Inclusion Policies:** Additional examples of DEI-related local government policies and program evaluations.

For more information about MSRC, go to: <https://mrsc.org/>

## **INSTITUTE FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT (CALIFORNIA)**

The [Institute for Local Government](#) (ILG) was founded in 1955 to promote inter-jurisdictional cooperation among local jurisdictions in California. ILG parent organizations include the California State Association of Counties, the League of California Cities, and the California Special Districts Association.

ILG serves local governments by convening people through meetings and conferences, providing a variety of training programs and workshops, and through research projects and publication of reports, toolkits, and informational materials on a wide range of public policy issues facing local governments.

ILG current areas of focus include: Ballot Measures and Campaigns, Budgeting and Financial Management, Climate Action, Economic Development, Effective Meetings, Ethics and Transparency, Land Use and Planning, Homelessness, Housing, Inclusive Public Engagement, Leadership and Governance, Introduction to Public Service, Recycling, Technology, and Public Sector Workforce Development and Civics Education.

ILG's Inclusive Public Engagement program offers a very wide array of reports, toolkits and tip sheets related to different aspects of effective public engagement. These materials are a valuable resource and are available on the ILG website. These resources include:

### **GETTING STARTED:**

- What is Public Engagement and Why Should I Do It?
- Effective Public Engagement Through Strategic Communication
- Three Orientations of Local Government Public Engagement: Passive—Active—Sustaining
- Principles of Local Government Public Engagement
- Working Effectively with Public Engagement Consultants: Tips for Local Officials
- Planning Public Engagement: Key Questions for Local Officials
- Increasing Access to Public Meetings and Events for People with Disabilities

### **DIFFICULT SITUATIONS IN PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT:**

- Beyond the Usuals: Ideas to Encourage Broader Public Involvement in Your Community
- Dealing with Deeply Held Concerns and Other Challenges to Public Engagement Processes
- Dealing with Emotional Audiences
- Free Speech vs. Hate Speech

- Dealing with a Grandstander

**TIERS PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT FRAMEWORK:** ILG has developed a five-pillar framework to help local governments plan and execute public engagement efforts. The pillars include:

- THINK: Self-Assessment; Consider Public Engagement Approach; Contemplate Community Landscape
- INITIATE: Draft Public Engagement Approach; Develop Outreach Plan; ‘Reality Check’
- ENGAGE: Implement Outreach Plan; Implement Public Engagement Approach; ‘Reality Check’
- REVIEW: Evaluate Public Engagement Approach; Evaluate Outreach Plan; What Barriers Did You Overcome?
- SHIFT: Internal Organizational Shifts; Shifts in External Relations; Policy Change.

**TIERS PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT LEARNING LAB:** The TIERS Public Engagement Learning Lab is an interactive, results-oriented 6-month program led by ILG that provides participants in California local government with hands-on instructions, exclusive TIERS public engagement tools, individualized support of their public engagement projects, follow up private consulting, and peer-to-peer learning.

**INCREASING COMMUNITY OUTREACH:** Tip sheet: “Expand Your Agency’s Community Connections” and case studies of successful community engagement in California communities.

**IMMIGRANT ENGAGEMENT AND INTEGRATION:** Guides, case studies, videos and conference reports on how to effectively engage immigrant communities. Some resources offered include:

- Language Access Laws and Legal Issues: A Local Official’s Guide
- Immigrants, the Economy and Civic Engagement
- Ten Ideas to Encourage Immigrant Engagement
- Local Governments Engaging Immigrants—Strategies That Work
- A Local Official’s Guide to Immigrant Civic Engagement
- Providing Language Access
- Ethnic Media
- Immigrant Engagement Stories

**PARTNERING WITH COMMUNITY-BASED ORGANIZATIONS:** Video case studies and publications including:

- Expand Your Agency’s Community Connections
- Partnering with Community-Based Organizations for More Broad-Based Public Engagement
- Public Participation in Local Government Decision Making
- Using a Collective Impact Framework for Community Partnerships

**ENGAGING CLERGY AND CONGREGATIONS:** Case studies, videos and publications including:

- A Local Official’s Guide to Working with Clergy and Congregations

**MEASURING SUCCESS AND SUSTAINING PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT:** Case studies and publications including:

- Measuring the Success of Local Public Engagement
- Assessing Public Engagement Effectiveness: Rapid Review Worksheets
- A New Strategy for Sustaining Public Engagement
- Sustaining Public Engagement—Best Practices and Resources

### LOCAL GOVERNMENT PERSONNEL INSTITUTE/LOCAL GOVERNMENT PERSONNEL SERVICES

In 1971, the League of Oregon Cities and the Association of Oregon Counties jointly created the [Local Government Personnel Institute](#) (LGPI) to offer human resources and labor relations assistance to Oregon cities, counties, and special districts. In 2020, the LGPI moved from the League of Oregon Cities to the Lane Council of Governments (LCOG) and took a new name, Local Government Personnel Services (LGPS).

LGPS offers local governments “no-cost technical assistance, and a discounted rate on LGPS consulting services, including Labor Relations representation, HR Assistance, pre-employment background checks, training” and other services. The LGPS website states that “Cities, counties, special districts, councils of governments, community colleges and other local governments” benefit from LGPS services.

While LGPS does not provide community engagement training and support, the LGPS model of providing support and services to local governments across the state—in this case housed at a local council of governments—is somewhat similar to the broader service model of MRSC and ILG and offers another possible vehicle that could be expanded to deliver community engagement support to local governments in Oregon.

### EFFORTS TO CREATE AN OREGON MRSC/CIVIC GAPS PROJECT

Dr. Phillip Cooper at PSU noted that there has been interest in Oregon in creating an Oregon version of MRSC to provide a range of services and support to local governments in our state similar to what is available to local governments in Washington and California.<sup>26</sup> He said he will be working with a doctoral student and the members of Portland State University’s Local Government Advisory Committee to explore the opportunities to move this project forward. Dr. Cooper also reported that he is working with the Local Government Advisory Committee on a “Civic Gaps Project” to explore and document the services and support currently available to Oregon local governments and gaps in this support.

### CONSULTING FIRMS

Consulting firms are a major resource for local governments. They bring expertise and experience a local government may not have in-house. Working with a consulting firm can give local government leaders and staff an opportunity to learn important community engagement skills and strategies by observing and working with consultants to engage their communities.

Many consulting firms and organizations in Oregon provide a wide range of community engagement services, including:

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<sup>26</sup> In fall 2020, Dr. Cooper surveyed city managers throughout the state to gauge their interest in various kinds of training and support. “Development of an organization-wide citizen engagement plan” ranked third of twenty-one options for “Interactive Training Sessions” and second of sixteen options for “Customized Work for a Local Government.”

**COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT CONSULTANTS:** Private firms that offer a broad range of services to help local governments design and implement community engagement plans and processes for a wide variety of policy, program, and project activities.

**DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION CONSULTANTS:** Consultants who work with local governments to build their capacity to engage communities of color and other historically underrepresented communities, and to build the capacity of these communities to have a voice in local decision-making.

**PLANNING, ENGINEERING, ENVIRONMENTAL AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CONSULTANTS:** Some consulting firms have created in-house community engagement teams that can provide community engagement services to local governments as part of larger engineering, environmental, housing, transportation, or economic development projects.

**PUBLIC RELATIONS CONSULTANTS:** Some local governments consult with public relations firms to assist them in engaging the community and other stakeholders around basic communications, project or policy advocacy, and crisis management.

**OTHER TYPES OF CONSULTANTS:** Other types of consultants also can help local governments build their capacity and effectively engage with their communities through processes like community visioning, strategic planning, and recruitment.

Our project did not attempt to create an exhaustive list of community engagement consultants available to local governments in Oregon. We emphasize that we do not endorse any particular firm or organization that provides services on a for-profit or fee-for-service basis. Please see Appendix 3 for some examples of each type of consultant.

Future work to develop a more complete list of different types of community engagement consultants and guidance for local governments on how to work most effectively with consultants could be very useful. One person we interviewed asked that in addition to the more well-known community engagement consulting firms, “Who’s out there doing great work at reasonable prices for smaller communities?” Others said tips on how to select a good consultant and a template for a good consultant service agreement or contract would be helpful. We also heard about the value to local governments of developing long-term partnerships and relationships with skilled consultants who can be brought into work on many different projects over time.

## **ACADEMIC INSTITUTIONS**

Oregon’s higher education institutions are another important source of community engagement learning, training, capacity building, and support for local governments. Some public colleges and universities offer coursework, degree programs, or certifications, and some are home to centers and institutes that help local government leaders engage their communities.

### **COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT COURSES AND DEGREE/CERTIFICATE PROGRAMS**

University courses and programs can build local government capacity for community engagement in at least three ways: (1) working professionals can take courses that enhance their skills and knowledge, (2) students who receive degrees in public administration or public policy may go on to work for local government, and (3) universities collaborate with local governments on publicly funded projects through student internships, fieldwork, and degree programs.

Some subject area programs offer individual courses on community engagement tailored to specific fields (e.g., public administration, public policy, land use planning, social work, health care, education, criminal justice).

Our project team completed a detailed survey of courses and degree programs at Oregon public universities. We identified 61 courses related to some aspect of community engagement (36 of which are offered at Portland State University). A more detailed report on our review of university academic courses and programs is available in Appendix 2. In the future, a similar review of courses and programs available at Oregon community colleges would be helpful.

In addition to individual courses, we found university degree or certificate programs that focus in some way on civic engagement. Examples include:

#### ***EOU SUSTAINABLE RURAL SYSTEMS DEGREE PROGRAM***

Eastern Oregon University (EOU) offers an undergraduate Sustainable Rural Systems degree program. Students take courses “designed for group-based learning” that “take on real-life challenges alongside community and industry partners. Students build distinct skill sets to address environmental remediation or restoration, public policy, rural development and other community-building projects.” Students “study all aspects of a rural community” and engage with local community leaders and organizations and community members on “authentic projects that improve the quality of life in our rural communities.” Our project team spoke with Dr. Shannon Donovan, who leads this program. The EOU program model, if expanded and replicated at other universities, could provide valuable assistance and capacity to local governments in smaller communities and in rural parts of Oregon.

#### ***OSU COMMUNITY HISTORY AND CIVIC ENGAGEMENT GRADUATE OPTION***

Oregon State University (OSU) offers this option as part of the university’s Master of Arts or Master of Science in History degree, which is designed to “empower students, as community members and citizens, with a deeper knowledge base and communications skills to engage in broad public debate and enrich public discourse.”

#### ***SOU POLITICAL SCIENCE CIVIC ENGAGEMENT CONCENTRATION***

Southern Oregon University (SOU) offers this concentration which the university states “prepares students to become engaged in many aspects of civic life, enabling them to be advocates and responsible participants in public discourse and debate.”

#### ***PSU CIVIC LEADERSHIP MINOR***

Portland State University offers an undergraduate Civic Leadership Minor. The program states that it “provides students with theoretical understanding and practical experience associated with civic leadership and prepares students to be responsibly engaged, social-justice oriented citizens, and community leaders.” In addition to course work, students are required to complete a civic-leadership practicum project or other independent community-based learning experience.

#### ***PSU CONFLICT RESOLUTION PROGRAM***

PSU’s Conflict Resolution Program offers an undergraduate major and minor in conflict resolution and graduate certificates in conflict resolution and applied conflict resolution as well as a master’s degree in conflict resolution.

### ***PSU NPCC ONLINE COLLABORATIVE GOVERNANCE GRADUATE CERTIFICATE***

The National Policy Consensus Center (NPCC) in the Hatfield School of Government at PSU offers this certificate program to help “government officials, nonprofit employees, business leaders, legal and mediation practitioners, and PSU graduate degree students” “build their careers by meeting the growing demand for people who can help diverse stakeholders collaborate on solutions to public issues....”

### ***PSU SERVICE-LEARNING AND COMMUNITY-BASED LEARNING CERTIFICATE***

The PSU College of Education offers this program which provides students with “historical, philosophical, and theoretical foundations of civic engagement as a form of learning and engaged democratic citizenship,” reviews relevant research and techniques, and engages students in “active community service, learning, teaching, programming, and assessment as a form of professional knowledge and skill development.”

### ***PROGRAMS, CENTERS, AND INSTITUTES***

Some higher education institutions are home to programs, centers, and institutes that offer community engagement research, consulting services, and training workshops. These entities often consult with local governments leaders and staff on how to respond to community engagement opportunities and challenges and help them design and implement community engagement processes.

Some examples of local government focused programs and centers at PSU:

### ***PSU HATFIELD SCHOOL LOCAL GOVERNMENT PROGRAM***

The Local Government Program in the Hatfield School of Government Public Administration Program is led by Dr. Phillip Cooper. Dr. Cooper told our project team that the program’s focus is not just to prepare students for a career in local government public administration, but also to serve the profession. The program is supported by a Local Government Advisory Committee of practitioners who helped develop the program and provide ongoing input and support. Dr. Cooper works closely with local government officials and local government associations like the OCCMA to provide them with practical research and support. Dr. Cooper is currently is working on a “Civics Gap Project” to identify the resources that are available to local governments in Oregon and gaps where more support is needed.<sup>27</sup>

### ***PSU NATIONAL POLICY CONSENSUS CENTER***

The National Policy Consensus Center (NPCC) and its collaborative governance programs are a major resource for local governments in Oregon. NPCC is housed in the Hatfield School of Government. NPCC’s major programs—Oregon Solutions, Oregon’s Kitchen Table, and Oregon Consensus—are described later in the section on dialogue and deliberation process providers. Our project team spoke with NPCC’s Laurel Singer, Wendy Willis, and Kristen Wright. They shared that NPCC works with local governments across Oregon, usually through individual projects with specific communities and workshops at local governments association conferences, including LOC and AOC. NPCC’s point of entry for its work is often through mayors or city administrators who are familiar with NPCC and who request consultation on a particular issue or project. In addition to working with cities, NPCC also works with counties and regional government collaboratives. NPCC stressed that their approach to

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<sup>27</sup> Dr. Cooper referred us to his recent book, *Local Government Administration: Governance in Communities* (2019) and the chapter he wrote on local government community engagement, “Chapter 7: Governing in Communities: The Local Government Organization and Its Engagement with the Community.”



capacity building includes helping local governments think about the preconditions for effective community engagement, such as building relationships in the community before a crisis occurs.

NPCC offers an Online Collaborative Governance Graduate Certificate and publishes research on collaborative governance. Some examples include:

- Collaborative Governance Principles, Processes, and Practical Tools (2021): “A new NPCC collaborative governance textbook, by Greenwood, Willis, and Singer, is situated in the practical—the place where students and practitioners and public managers might apply theory, and especially lessons learned, to the real-life issues they encounter in communities.”
- “Oregon Atlas of Collaboration” (described in this report in the section on COGs and Regional Collaboratives)
- “Building a Collaborative Governance Framework: A Five-Step Process”
- “A Practical Guide to Intergovernmental Entities in Oregon”

### **PSU CENTER FOR PUBLIC SERVICE**

The Center for Public Service (CPS) “provides individuals and public sector and non-profit organizations access to the intellectual resources and practical experience of the Hatfield School of Government in order to improve governance, civic capacity and public management locally, regionally, nationally and around the globe.”

CPS’s mission is to “help connect academic professionals, practitioners, consultants, trainers, and students who have expertise in consulting, research, and professional development, with practitioners in the public service sector who share our interest in public service leadership and organizational capacity building.”

CPS offers “a wide range of on-demand services and resources for Oregon’s local governments,” including “interactive training or custom consulting” in the following areas: community-building and community engagement, governing board effectiveness, managing the organization, human resources, budget and finance, and environment.” The Center’s assistance in community-building and community engagement includes: “techniques for community-building sessions to deal with difficult challenges,” “establishment of citizen involvement plans,” “encouraging input and involvement by hard-to-reach communities,” “developing a Citizens Academy,” and “getting things done through collaboration and partnerships.” The CPS Senior Fellows Program involves local government practitioners and researchers who have considerable experience on the front lines and work on projects to advance the field. CPS fellowship programs place skilled graduate level students with local governments looking to increase their capacity.

CPS staff, faculty, and senior fellows offer training and research to local governments to help them build their capacity. Recent examples of training workshops include the “Newly Elected Officials Leadership Academy” and “Effective Public Engagement: Tools & Techniques” hosted by CPS and presented by the Davenport Institute. In 2020, the City of Milwaukie contracted with CPS to review the City’s extensive community engagement efforts. Another example is this research project to survey community engagement capacity building opportunities for local governments in Oregon.

### **COMMUNITY ORGANIZING AND ADVOCACY GROUPS**

Community organizations that support and advocate for shared-identity and cultural groups have been growing in number and capacity in recent years across Oregon. They can be valuable partners to local

governments seeking to engage with these communities. It is important to recognize that the mission of these groups is not to help local government do their work, and local governments should be prepared to compensate these organizations for their assistance. Developing long-term, mutually beneficial partnerships between local government and community organizations can advance equitable engagement and help local leaders and staff improve their cultural awareness and culturally appropriate skill sets. Some of these organizations also have partnered with local governments to develop leadership training programs for their communities as a strategy to increase the effectiveness of their advocacy work.

People we interviewed mentioned a variety of community-based organizations that have helped local governments engage authentically and effectively with the communities these organizations serve and support. It was beyond the scope of our project to look more deeply into these organizations, but we wanted to share what we learned from their websites. This is by no means an exhaustive list of these types of organizations in Oregon. Additional research to identify more cases of local organizations working with governments to help build community engagement capacity would be valuable.

### **ADELANTE MUJERES**

Adelante Mujeres is “working to build a more just society by empowering Latinas to lead.” Adelante Mujeres “offers Latina women and their families holistic programs and the tools to achieve self-determination in the areas of: education, leadership training, and enterprise.” The organization’s Washington County Civic Leaders Project works with “participants from communities of color to conduct specific, hands-on leadership training to better equip them to engage in county government decision making and to actively participate in civic life in the community.”

### **ASIAN PACIFIC AMERICAN NETWORK OF OREGON**

APANO was founded in 1996 with support from the Immigrant and Refugee Organization (IRCO) in Multnomah County. APANO’s mission is to unite “Asians and Pacific Islanders to build power, develop leaders, and advance equity through organizing, advocacy, community development, and cultural work.” APANO describes its primary areas of work as:

- **Community Organizing:** “The core of APANO’s work is building a powerful base of members who cocreate and co-lead campaigns that address real issues in their community. Our community organizing results in concrete change through policy, public investments, political influence, and greater solidarity with other communities of color and allies.”
- **Cultural Work:** “By elevating members’ stories and connecting them to issues, APANO aims to advance a long-term cultural strategy to impact beliefs, actions and policies through centering the voices of those most impacted and silenced, resisting and shifting harmful narratives and ideas, and moving beyond defensive strategies to envisioning alternatives.”
- **Leadership Development:** “APANO offers year-round opportunities to cultivate the skills and confidence of our members to analyze community needs and solutions, act strategically and take on increased leadership roles at APANO and in the community.”
- **Political Advocacy:** “APANO’s political advocacy and civic engagement work elevates issues through community engagement and research, connects with and mobilizes voters, and coordinates grassroots advocacy actions through member-led campaigns, in order to build power, win concrete changes and ensure all API’s have a voice in the policies and decisions that affect their lives.”

- **Jade District & Community Development:** The Jade District in southeast Portland “is APANO’s first venture into place-based organizing by partnering with neighborhood associations and local businesses in order to meet the economic needs of residents.”

## CENTRO CULTURAL

“At [Centro Cultural](#), our foundation is equity and belonging. Our team is deeply connected to and invested in our Washington County community. This is our familia, and we feel a responsibility to make sure everyone has the opportunity to thrive—not just survive. Our programs and services continue to evolve to meet the needs of our communities, removing barriers to health, well-being and economic mobility.” Centro Cultural’s programs include:

- “Empower people to find living wage jobs, advance their careers, and build a strong foundation for themselves and their families;”
- “Connect our community and provide resources so people can lead a healthy thriving life;”
- “Promote advocacy and build civic leadership skills within our community to change systemic inequalities and fight for affordable housing, transportation improvements, climate justice and more; and”
- “Hold education programs and workforce development opportunities for young people to gain real world application for science, technology, engineering, art and math.”

## COALITION OF COMMUNITIES OF COLOR

The [CCC](#) was formed in 2001 and is “an alliance of culturally-specific community-based organizations with representation from the following communities of color: African, African-American, Asian, Latino, Middle Eastern and North African, Native American, Pacific Islander, and Slavic.”

The CCC’s mission is to “address the socioeconomic disparities, institutional racism, and inequity of services experienced by our families, children and communities; and to organize our communities for collective action resulting in social change to obtain self-determination, wellness, justice and prosperity.” The organization “supports a collective racial justice effort to improve outcomes for communities of color through policy analysis and advocacy, environmental justice, culturally-appropriate data and research, and leadership development in communities of color.”

CCC also has produced influential research studies that profile different communities of color and publications that call for action on racial equity and justice in a number of different policy areas.

CCC programs include:

- **Research and Data Justice:** The Research Justice Institute (RJI) at CCC conducts research that “defers to BIPOC communities, elevates the everyday knowledge and strategies of BIPOC communities as data, and bridges the divide between community and dominant institutions through power and the use of BIPOC data.” The RJI “conducts various community-led research projects, provides expert consultation to public and private institutions, and builds the research and data capacity of member and non-member organizations.”
- **Leadership Development:** The CCC created the “Bridges” leadership initiative for Oregon’s communities of color to “significantly expand the capacity of our communities to self-organize, network, build culturally specific social capital, and provide leadership within and outside communities of color. The program “houses six culturally specific leadership development programs

led by CCC member organizations and provides ongoing support through leadership placements, mentorship and community networks. The six leadership programs include: African American Leadership Academy, Slavic Leadership Development Project, LEAD for Oregon’s Native Communities, UNIDOS for Oregon Latino Leadership, Asian Pacific Islander Community Leadership Institute, and African Leadership Development Institute.

- **Collective Advocacy:** CCC’s advocacy work seeks to advance “policies in Oregon that have the best potential to improve outcomes for communities of color.” CCC pursues this goal by:
  - “Building the capacity of communities and organizations of color to successfully advance policy agendas;”
  - “Reforming policy practices to ensure authentic community engagement of the communities most directly impacted by policy change;”
  - “Shifting discourses to centralize the voices of communities of color in policy conversations; and”
  - “Building partnerships and coalitions with allied individuals and organizations.”
- **Environmental Justice:** CCC’s environmental justice work seeks to broaden “Oregon’s environmental and climate movements so that they proactively advance solutions that provide environmental benefits and expand opportunities for communities of color and low-income communities.”

## LATINO NETWORK

Latino Network “was founded in 1996 by community leaders who grew concerned about the lack of adequate resources to meet the needs of the growing Latino community. Since that time, we have evolved to become an organization that also encompasses transformational programs aimed at educating and empowering Multnomah County Latinos. Low achievement scores, youth violence and high dropout rates undermine the Latino community’s potential. We address these issues by promoting early literacy, encouraging parent involvement, working with gang-involved and adjudicated youth and families, and providing academic support and activities to high school aged youth. We also build leadership capacity for youth and adults.” “We are a Latino-led education organization, grounded in culturally specific practices and services, that lifts up youth and families to reach their full potential. Our work springs from the core belief in Latino community self-determination—that is, the ability of community members to participate meaningfully in the decisions that affect their lives and the lives of their families.”

## MADRES DE CORAZÓN

Madres de Corazón was founded at Whitcom Elementary School in Milwaukie, Oregon about nine years ago. The group was started to meet the needs of Spanish-speaking mothers who walk their children to school (often with their younger, pre-school siblings) and wanted to be able to spend time together to get connected with each other and the school. The group meets every Monday. When the school was rebuilt, the North Clackamas School District created a meeting space for the Madres group in the new school building. The group has helped mothers develop a strong relationship with the school. They are also a valuable partner for the North Clackamas School District and help provide input and involvement from the local Latino community.

## MUSLIM EDUCATIONAL TRUST

MET was founded in 1993 “with the dream to help create an open, empowering, and collaborative atmosphere within the Muslim community in the great Portland area. Over the years, MET has made

significant strides in the development of Portland’s Islamic-based education. MET’s focus on education through positive interaction with Muslims and non-Muslims and honest communication with the media and public officials has positive impacted not only the people of Portland, but well beyond our local area.” The organization conducts the following activities:

- Presents public lectures about Islam to educate both Muslims and Non-Muslims.
- Establishes interfaith dialogue to open channels of communication with people of different faiths.
- Operates an informal speakers bureau.
- Educates local news organizations for non-biased news coverage.
- Publishes a quarterly newsletter, Al-Hewar.
- Coordinates communications between Muslim organizations, Islamic Centers, and the community.
- Operates a full-time licensed and accredited Islamic School.
- Is a co-founding member of several Interfaith Organizations: Institute for Christian Muslim Understanding (ICMU), Arab-Jewish-Muslim Dialogue, Interfaith Council of Great Portland (ICGP) and Between Women Interfaith Group.

### **NATIVE AMERICAN YOUTH AND FAMILY CENTER**

NAYA was “founded by the community, for the community. NAYA is a family of numerous tribes and voices who are rooting in sustaining tradition and building cultural wealth. We provide culturally specific programs and services that guide our people in the direction of personal success and balance through cultural empowerment. Our continuum of lifetime services create a wraparound, holistic healthy environment that is Youth Centered, Family Driven, Elder Guided.” The organization’s focus on community engagement is based on a belief “that cultural engagement is civic engagement. A strong sense of cultural identity naturally leads to a desire to participate in civic life. Native peoples are often underrepresented in Census figures and in political determinations. Making our strengths known and voices heard as a community is an important part of the work we do at NAYA.” NAYA also participates in the Oregon LEAD Program housed with the Coalition of Communities of Color Bridges Initiative. The program builds “leadership capacity across Native communities throughout Oregon” to “help participants see themselves as leaders and access the leadership skills that they possess as well as building new skills to be support their work and community.”

### **UNITE OREGON**

The mission: “Led by people of color, immigrants and refugees, rural communities, and people experiencing poverty, we work across Oregon to build a unified intercultural movement for justice.” The organization has four main program areas:

- **Civic Engagement:** “United Oregon’s civic engagement programs provide pathways for community members to participate in democratic processes, serve as leaders on boards and commissions, and engage in the issues that matter most to them.”
- **Policy Advocacy:** “Unite Oregon advocates for policy changes at the local, state, and national levels that increase equity and reduce disparities experienced by immigrants, refugees, people of color, rural communities, and people experiencing poverty.

- **Intergenerational Leadership Development:** “Unite Oregon develops new leaders through signature leadership development programs, through strategic trainings, and through on-the-ground leadership positions within our issue campaigns.”
- **Community Organizing:** “Unite Oregon assists our members in building the organizing skills necessary to impact policies that affect them and to work collaboratively, mobilizing diverse constituencies.” (<https://www.uniteoregon.org/>)

### **VIRGINIA GARCIA MEMORIAL HEALTH CENTER**

[Virginia Garcia](#) was founded in the 1970s, and today “provides healthcare services to 52,000 patients a year in Washington and Yamhill counties at five primary care clinics and pharmacies, six dental clinics, a Women’s Clinic, and five school-based health centers.” The organization also provides “outreach to schools, community health fairs and to migrant and seasonal farmworkers at local camps and commercial nurseries” through a mobile clinic. Virginia Garcia seeks out “strategic partnerships as an approach to improving the health of our community.”

Virginia Garcia sees its role as providing “whole care” and “being part of the communities we serve.” The organization achieves its mission through advocacy, outreach “to those living around us to offer services,” wellness classes and activities, and uses a patient-centered approach that provides “a team of providers for every patient that calls Virginia Garcia their health care home.”

### **DIALOGUE AND DELIBERATION ORGANIZATIONS**

Dialogue and deliberation are powerful ways to engage community members in local government decision making. This section describes dialogue and deliberation trainers and process providers in Oregon and nationally. It also describes mediation and conflict resolution organizations that can help community members talk together about difficult issues.

**Dialogue and Deliberation Trainers and Process Providers:** Dialogue and deliberation trainers and process providers offer training, consultation, design, and facilitation of deliberative processes to help community members address complex and challenging issues. Some of the best service providers can be found in Oregon. Several national organizations also promote the use of dialogue and deliberation, act as clearinghouses for news and resources, and bring together networks of practitioners, public administrators, community activists, and researchers.

Dialogue and deliberation organizations in Oregon include:

### **OREGON’S KITCHEN TABLE**

[Oregon’s Kitchen Table](#) (OKT) works with local governments across Oregon to design and support processes to help community members “share their ideas, opinions, beliefs and resources in improving Oregon and our communities.” OKT is a program of the National Policy Census Center at PSU. OKT strives to:

- “Create simple, easy-to-use platforms (online and in person) for statewide public engagement.
- Promote in-depth public engagement with the tough trade-offs and challenges decision makers confront in governing our state.
- Provide leaders with high-quality feedback on issues that matter to Oregonians.
- Increase Oregonians’ interest in participating in local, regional, and statewide decision making.

- Empower citizens and decision-makers to communicate and work together in a fact-based, civil, and creative ways.”

## OREGON SOLUTIONS

Oregon Solutions has worked with hundreds of communities across Oregon to solve challenging problems using a system and process they call “collaborative governance.” Collaborative governance “is a process whereby community leaders join forces to define a problem, agree on a solution, and collaborate towards a resolution.” Oregon Solutions brings “the business, nonprofit, and civic sector to the table to make commitments, take on specific roles and responsibilities, leverage and pool resources, and ultimately, solve the problem.” Oregon Solutions is housed in the National Policy Consensus Center at Portland State University.

Oregon Solutions states that the idea for a project “might start with a nonprofit association leader, a business leader, or a local official.” The formal Oregon Solutions process then includes the following steps:

- “A community in Oregon defines a problem they want to solve.”
- “The governor designates an impartial convener to bring people together.”
- “The convener forms a multi-disciplinary team” of interested and affected parties.
- “The team collaborates to develop an integrated solution” using “negotiations and problem-solving... through facilitated meetings...until consensus is reached” typically over six to eight months.
- The participants sign a “Declaration of Cooperation” that identifies “the specific contributions, roles and responsibilities for each party moving forward.”
- Implementation begins with agreements made and the participants playing their specific agreed to roles.
- Oregon Solutions hosts a “re-convening’ meeting after six months to check in on progress and report back to the governor.” (<https://orsolutions.org/>)

## REGIONAL SOLUTIONS

Regional Solutions uses a similar approach to Oregon Solutions. Regional Solutions “recognizes the unique needs of each Oregon region, and the importance of working locally to identify priorities, solve problems, and seize opportunities to get projects done.” Regional Solutions Centers are located across Oregon. Each center starts “at the local level to identify priorities” and “works from the bottom up to solve problems and complete projects.” Regional Solutions Centers integrate state agency work and funding to

ensure that projects are finished as quickly and cost-effectively as possible.”

(<https://www.oregon.gov/gov/regional-solutions/pages/default.aspx>)

## COUNTY SOLUTIONS

County Solutions supports county leaders and helps them convene and participate in collaborative problem-solving efforts in their communities and regions. A goal of the program is to help county leaders and staff build the capacity to respond when issues or opportunities arise. The County Solutions program is patterned after the Oregon Solutions and Regional Solutions programs. The scope of the projects can vary from single-county issues—like a water issue in Polk County—to more

complex regional issues like completion of the Oregon Coast Trail, which involves multiple counties and stakeholders. AOC staff member Andy Smith directs this program.

(<https://oregoncounties.org/county-solutions/>)

## HEALTHY DEMOCRACY

Healthy Democracy describes itself as a “nonprofit that designs and coordinates innovative deliberative democracy programs.” Some of Healthy Democracy’s programs that can support local government leaders and staff include:

- **Citizens’ Initiative Review:** Healthy Democracy created the Citizens’ Initiative Review process that brings together “randomly selected and representative panels” of Oregon voters to provide voters with “clear, comprehensive, and accurate information, removed from campaign messaging and financial influence” The panels interview measure advocates and topic experts, “evaluate the most important facts for voters to know,” and “write a report that is distributed through official voters’ guides” and other means.
- **Municipal Citizens Juries:** Healthy Democracy works with local government officials to convene panels of “randomly selected and representative” community members to help local leaders “tackle tough policy questions. Jury members meet over four days and “conduct research, interview experts and staff,” deliberate on policy alternatives, and recommend “a course of action to decision-makers.”<sup>28</sup>
- **Citizen Assemblies:** Citizen Assemblies use a similar process to Citizen Juries to research and provide recommendations on a public policy question but involve 50 to 150 community members.
- **Community Oregon:** Community Oregon is a “statewide program that brings rural and urban Oregonians together to build trust and mutual understanding through dialogue and local community immersion.” (<https://healthydemocracy.org/>)

## PARTICIPATORY BUDGETING OREGON

Participatory Budgeting Oregon (PBO) describes participatory budgeting as “a democratic process in which community members decide how to spend a part of a public budget.” PBO states that “It gives real people real power over real money.” Local government officials can use participatory budgeting to set aside a pot of money and engage the community in determining how it will be spent. Community representatives “define objectives and set rules of engagement for projects,” brainstorm project ideas, transform proposal ideas into feasible projects, and vote on the projects they want funded.” Local government leaders then fund the winning projects. Participatory Budgeting processes have been used in communities all over the world. (<https://www.pboregon.org/>)

Examples of national dialogue and deliberation organizations include:

## CENTER FOR PUBLIC DELIBERATION

The Center for Public Deliberation (CPD) at Colorado State University states that it is dedicated to “enhancing local democracy through improved public communication and community problem-solving.” CPD’s aim is to “improve the way our community is able to talk through complex issues so that we can

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<sup>28</sup> In 2019, the City of Milwaukie, Oregon, with support from Healthy Democracy, became the first city in Oregon to use a citizens jury to answer a policy question. The question was, “Should Milwaukie City Council members be paid more than their current volunteer stipend? If so, how much should Council members be compensated?”



arrive at better decisions.” CPD states that deliberation “requires open spaces for citizens to come together, good and fair information to help structure the conversation and skilled facilitators to guide the process.” CPD works to provide all three of these key ingredients. Martín Carcasson, CPD founder and director, is a national leader in the field of dialogue and deliberation and serves on the NCDD board and works in partnership with the Kettering Foundation. Some CPD resources include:

- **Overview Video:** Carcasson provides a very helpful overview of public deliberation in his video [“CivEd Talks—Doing Civic Engagement through a Wicked Problems Lens: The Case for Passionate Impartiality”](#)
- **Online Training Modules:** CPD offers training modules on its website includes helpful tools to use “in conversations about challenging issues.” Module topics include: “Centering Equity,” “Mapping your Networks,” “Deliberative Interviewing,” “Active Listening,” and “Offering Social Support.”
- **Trainings:** Our project team discovered through our survey of the Regional Area Neighborhood Coordinators (RANCS) group that the City of Renton, Washington brought Carcasson to their community to do a training that provided an overview of the “deliberative engagement” model for community engagement.
- **Community Project Guides and Reports:** Deliberative process guides and project reports. (<https://cpd.colostate.edu/>)

#### NATIONAL ISSUES FORUMS INSTITUTE

The National Issues Forums Institute (NIFI) is a partner of the Kettering Foundation. NIFI states that National Issues Forums are organized by “a variety of organizations, groups and individuals” to “offer citizen the opportunity to join together to deliberate, to make choices with others about ways to approach difficult issues and to work toward creating reasoned public judgment. Forums range from small or large group gathering similar to town hall meetings, to study circles held in public places or in people’s homes on an ongoing basis.” They allow “people of diverse views and experiences to seek a shared understanding of the problem and to search for common ground for action.” NIFI offers many resources on its website, including a list of affiliates in every state. (<https://www.nifi.org/>)

#### NATIONAL COALITION FOR DIALOGUE AND DELIBERATION

The National Coalition for Dialogue and Deliberation (NCDD) describes itself as “a network of innovators who bring people together across divides to discuss, decide, and take action together effectively on today’s toughest issues. NCDD serves as a gathering place, a resource center, a news source, and a facilitative leader for this vital community of practice.” NCDD resources include:

- **Resource and News Clearinghouse:** The NCDD Resource Center offers over 3,000 “discussion guides, methods, evaluation tools, articles, books, videos” and more. The NCDD Community News blog includes posts about “funding and job opportunities, events and trainings, news articles and tools” and more.
- **Education Resources:** NCDD education resources are valuable tools for people who are new to dialogue and deliberation processes, including a Resource Guide on Public Engagement, a Quick Reference Glossary to over one hundred terms, Core Principles for Public Engagement, an Engagement Streams Framework, and a Beginners Guide. (<https://www.ncdd.org/>)

## PUBLIC AGENDA

Public Agenda describes itself as a “national, nonpartisan, nonprofit research and public engagement organization” that strives to “strengthen democracy and expand opportunity for all Americans. Public Agenda asserts that the organization brings to its work a “deep understanding, based on decades of research” of how the “public comes to terms with complex issues” and “how people engage with their communities in problem solving” and “the things that help them do so.” Public Agenda uses this knowledge to:

- “provide leaders with rich insight into the public’s thinking on important issues, with an emphasis on current and potential common ground on solutions;”
- “help citizens become more informed and thoughtful as they vote, advocate, volunteer or otherwise work for progress; and”
- “support communities, cities and states in developing richer opportunities and pathways for civic engagement and problem solving.”

Public Agenda’s approach to public engagement seeks to help “people make public decisions, solve public problems, and build community, all of which are important and essential” to build and sustain “healthy communities and democracies.” Public Agenda “helps communities build sustainable solutions” that: “Listen to and collaborate with the public,” “Make engagement equitable and inclusive,” “Conduct meaningful outreach and organizing,” “Create unique engagement strategies,” “Make engagement fun,” and “Measure the impact of engagement.” (<https://www.publicagenda.org/>) Public Agenda offers a wide range of resources, including:

- **Keeping People Connected: A nuts-and-bolts toolkit for engaging residents, businesses, and property owners in problem-solving, decision-making and community-building:** “Toolkit featuring real examples for community members at various levels to learn how to sustain engagement.”
- **Strengthening and Sustaining Public Engagement: A Planning Guide for Communities:** “Guide to help community members determine which kind of engagement is the right fit and how to sustain that engagement.”
- **Taking the Conversation Virtual:** “A premier guide for managing and participating in digital meetings and discussions.”
- **Engagement Scorecard:** “Blog post featuring Public Agenda’s own engagement measurement tool for community members to rate their experiences with public engagement activities.”
- **Digital Tools for Engagement:** “Blog post featuring many of the engagement tools used by Public Agenda” in their own practice and work.
- **Text, Talk, Engage (TTE):** “Accessible and customizable SMS tool that combines texting with face-to-face discussion to inform public policy, stimulate volunteerism and organize new initiatives.”

## EVERYDAY DEMOCRACY

Everyday Democracy works with communities to design and implement community dialogues through their “Dialogue to Change” process. See more about their work in the following section on “Equity Organizations.” (<https://www.everyday-democracy.org/>)

## MEDIATION AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION ORGANIZATIONS

Many states have organizations that support the use of mediation and collaborative conflict resolution processes. They provide networking opportunities for mediators, help the community access skilled

mediators and facilitators, and support training and volunteer mediation programs. Some cities also have neighborhood mediation programs or partnerships with community service providers.

### OREGON CONSENSUS

Oregon Consensus was established by the Oregon legislature in 1989 to professionalize community dispute mediation, and today acts as a forum that conducts multi-party dispute resolution on public policy questions throughout the state. Oregon Consensus works with “government entities, nongovernmental organizations, decision makers, community members and others to address public policy issues collaboratively.” Oregon Consensus helps people “examine and weigh diverse viewpoints and interests and find commonalities” to “combine their efforts” and “build solutions they all can support.” Oregon Consensus is housed in the National Policy Consensus Center at Portland State University. Oregon Consensus mediators and facilitators:

- “Assess situations and bring the right people to the table to discuss them.”
- “Design and facilitate meetings to make sure all viewpoints are considered.”
- “Help groups sort through information to support sound decisions.”
- “Help groups convey their recommendations or agreements in writing.”

(<https://oregonconsensus.org/>)

### OREGON MEDIATION ASSOCIATION

The Oregon Mediation Association (OMA) was founded in 1986 to support the development of and support and advocate for the use of mediation as a useful conflict management tool and an alternative to traditional adversarial approaches to conflict. OMA “provides opportunities for mediators to work together to elevate the quality and expand the availability of mediation programs and services in Oregon.” OMA also provides information about:

- **Finding a Mediator:** OMA maintains a directory of mediators who are OMA members. These mediators are “committed to the OMA Core Standards of Practice and the OMA Mediator Complaint Process.
- **Community Dispute Resolution Centers:** “Neighborhood Mediation or Dispute Resolution Centers offer services in many Oregon counties.” The centers often have paid staff but the majority of their mediation work is conducted by volunteer mediators who receive training and supervision from the centers. The Oregon Office of Community Dispute Resolutions “maintains a current list of all such community mediation programs in Oregon. (<https://ormediation.org/>)

### RESOLUTIONS NW

Resolutions NW (RNW) provides consultation, training, and direct services, including mediation and facilitation, restorative justice professional development, coaching and consultation. They also offer racial equity leadership development, coaching, and organizational assessment. RNW trains volunteers in mediation and facilitation, and they offer online training programs and custom workshops for groups of all sizes. The City of Portland has contracted with RNW to provide free neighbor-to-neighbor mediation services to help resolve disputes in the community. (<https://resolutionsnorthwest.org/>)

## EQUITY ORGANIZATIONS

Equity organizations can partner with local governments that are working to transform their own institutions and to advance equity in various ways. They offer models of how to work together effectively, and they can share best practices, tools, and resources.

### NW PUBLIC EMPLOYEES DIVERSITY CONFERENCE

Twenty-eight years ago, Multnomah County, soon joined by the City of Portland, began sponsoring an annual conference to support diversity and inclusion in the workplace. Since then, other public employers in the Pacific Northwest have joined in sponsoring this annual event to promote “diversity values of inclusiveness, respectful work environments, equal opportunity for all, and culturally responsive service.” Conference workshops focus on a wide variety of topics related to racism, equity, inclusion, and cultural awareness. (<https://www.nwpedc.org/>)

### CENTER FOR DIVERSITY AND THE ENVIRONMENT

The Center for Diversity & the Environment (CDE) states that it “harnesses the power of racial and ethnic diversity to transform the U.S. environmental movement by developing leaders, catalyzing change within institutions & building alliances.” CDE brings “a sophisticated understanding of power and privilege,” and understanding of “how to assess equity in outcomes,” and “must skillfully create safe spaces and build trust in order to support an opening to vulnerability and courage so that participants can dig deep into learning and engage their hearts in the process of radical change.” CDE seeks change at three levels:

- **Individual:** CDE’s “transformational leadership opportunities speak to individuals who wish to become effective change agents in their communities.”
- **Organizational:** CDE supports organizational change through “retreats, trainings, and coaching & consulting services that ensure ongoing institutional evolution.”
- **Movement-wide:** CDE coordinates a national coalition “to bridge the historical divide between the environmental community and communities of color.” (<https://www.cdeinspires.org/>)

### GOVERNMENT ALLIANCE ON RACE AND EQUITY

GARE describes itself as a “national network of government working to achieve racial equity and advance opportunities for all.” GARE is a joint project of Race Forward and the Other and Belonging Institute at UC Berkeley. GARE recognizes the growing field of practice in local and regional governments to advance racial equity, eliminate inequities and increase “success for all.” GARE tools and resources include:

- **Monthly online information sessions** about GARE membership benefits.
- **Event Materials** from “national and regional convenings and webinars.”
- **Issue Papers** that “describe topics and approaches that have impact, as well as examples from cities and counties that provide the opportunity to learn from the experiences of others.”
- **Racial Equity Tools** including “a Racial Equity Tool from the Alliance that captures an overall approach to integrating racial equity into routine decision-making, as well as examples from our cohort of jurisdictions at the forefront of racial equity.”
- **Videos** that tell the stories of GARE’s work. (<https://www.racialequityalliance.org/>)

## RACE FORWARD

Race Forward describes its “Building Racial Equity” series as “a collection of interactive trainings for those who wish to sharpen their skills and strategies to address structural racism and advance racial equity.” Race Forward states that these trainings “emphasize how to challenge and change institutional racial inequities,” as differentiated from “diversity trainings” that “primarily focus on interpersonal relations and understanding.” The foundational Building Racial Equity trainings include:

- **Building Racial Equity (Level 1)—Foundation:** Participants “build a clear understanding of key concepts such as racial equity and structural racism;” “learn to talk about race constructively within their organizations and with their constituents;” “gain tools and practices for counteracting racial bias in their work and practices;” and “identify opportunities and next steps for applying concepts and strategies to advance racial equity.”
- **Organizing Racial Equity (Level 2)—Shifting Power:** Participants “build on and strengthen racial equity practices for themselves and their organizations and networks” and strengthen their “collective analysis of power” and gain “useful tools and framework to shift power within groups, institutions and other formations seeking to advance racial justice in this time.”

Amanda Garcia-Snell, community engagement program manager with Washington County, told our project team that Washington County encourages employees to take both the foundational IAP2 trainings and the GARE/Race Forward foundational equity trainings. Garcia-Snell shared that Washington County’s GARE membership gives them five slots per quarter that employees can use to take GARE and Race Forward trainings, and that these trainings are available to both employees and elected officials. (<https://www.raceforward.org/>)

## EVERYDAY DEMOCRACY

Everyday Democracy “supports organizing across the country by bringing diverse groups of people together, helping them structure and facilitate community dialogue on pressing issues, and training them to use a racial equity lens to understand longstanding problems and possible solutions.” Their approach includes the multiple elements: organizing, facilitation, dialogue, action, evaluation, and sustaining progress. They offer tools, including an Intergenerational Equity Framework, Ground Rules for Virtual Meetings and Conversations, and a framework and mapping tool for evaluating community engagement. (<https://www.everyday-democracy.org/>)

## POLICYLINK

PolicyLink describes itself as “a national research and action institute advancing racial and economic equity by Lifting Up What Works®.” PolicyLink advances equity by advocating for “groundbreaking policy changes that enable everyone, especially people of color, to be economically secure, live in healthy communities of opportunity, and benefit from a just society.” PolicyLink states that it is “guided by the belief that the solutions to the nation’s challenges lie with those closest to these challenges: when the wisdom, voice, and experience of those traditionally absent from policy making drive the process, profound policy transformations emerge.” PolicyLink offers “featured publications, webinars, news, and tools” to assist organizations to advocate for “public investments to create economic opportunity and healthy communities; integrating data into policy initiatives and advancing policies and strategies to build an economy in which everyone can participate and prosper.” (<https://www.policylink.org/>)

## ONLINE TOOL PROVIDERS

Some local governments contract with companies that offer customized online tools for communication and community engagement. These providers typically collect data about digital communication and online participation for their clients, and they may moderate online forums themselves and/or train government staff on how to use the tools.

Future work to develop a more complete list of online engagement tools and providers, pros and cons of different products, and strategies and tips on when and how to use them would be very helpful, along with case studies of local governments in Oregon that rely on them.

In addition to ubiquitous social media platforms (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram) and widely used online survey tools (SurveyMonkey, Google Forms), there are service providers who offer sophisticated suites of online tools. Because these are for-profit private companies and we endorse none of them individually, we have included some examples in Appendix 3.

## PEER SUPPORT NETWORKS

Professional peer groups provide valuable support and information to local government leaders and staff, especially those responsible for community engagement. They provide the kind of information, tools, shared experiences, and case studies that are most useful to support the work of their members. This section provides examples of different kinds of peer groups in Oregon, some within a single jurisdiction, some across jurisdictions, and some entirely informal.

### PEER GROUPS WITHIN A SINGLE JURISDICTION

When community engagement staff meet and work together, they can help overcome fragmentation and increase the quality and consistency of community engagement across different departments. They can also share valuable information about the community, potential community partners, and effective strategies and techniques.

- **City of Milwaukie:** City of Milwaukie staff from different city departments who support community engagement meet regularly to share information and best practices. They identify best practices to increase the quality and consistency of community engagement across city government. Five staff members participated together in the five-day IAP2 Foundations training.
- **City of Portland, Citywide Public Involvement Network (CPIN):** For many years, the City of Portland also supported regular meetings of community engagement staff from different city agencies. Participants shared community engagement challenges and best practices and heard presentations from community representatives on how to most effectively engage different communities. Portland's [Public Involvement Advisory Council \(PIAC\)](#) also provides peer networking opportunities for city staff (along with community volunteers) in a more formally established setting. PIAC is discussed below among the examples of community engagement by local jurisdictions in Oregon.

### PEER GROUPS ACROSS JURISDICTIONS

When local government leaders and staff from different jurisdictions meet with their peers regularly, they can share valuable resources and lessons learned and help establish expectations for good practice in the field.

- **Metro Public Engagement Review Committee (PERC):** Metro's PERC is established in the agency's charter to review and make recommendations "on Metro's engagement strategies and practices at

the project and program level,” review “the annual public engagement report,” and make recommendations to the Metro Council about engagement priorities.” The membership of PERC includes public involvement staff from [Clackamas](#), [Multnomah](#) and [Washington](#) counties, staff or board members from local community organizations, and at-large community members. In addition to its advisory role at Metro, it offers networking and peer support opportunities for staff (and community members) from different neighboring jurisdictions.

- **[Regional Area Neighborhood Coordinators \(RANCS\)](#)**: The RANCS group includes neighborhood and community engagement program managers from local governments from [Bellingham](#) to [Eugene](#) and east to [Wentachee](#) and [Bend](#). Group members schedule gatherings a few times a year and use their email list to ask each other for information and support on a wide variety of community engagement issues and challenges.

### INFORMAL PEER GROUPS

Sometimes peer groups evolve organically when a few people who do similar work decide to create an ad hoc group and share their knowledge and experiences. Amanda Garcia-Snell, community engagement program manager with Washington County, shared two examples of informal peer support groups of which she is a member. One is a group of individuals who support different community leadership training programs or academies, such as those offered by [Virginia Garcia Memorial Health Center](#), [City of Hillsboro](#) and other community organizations and local governments. The group’s members share information and help people in their communities learn about different opportunities to develop leadership skills. The other informal group includes community engagement program managers who get together for happy-hour gatherings, share information, and help each other work through challenges. Garcia-Snell said the group includes representatives from [City of Gresham](#), [Clackamas County](#), [Metro](#), [City of Portland](#), [Multnomah County](#), [City of Beaverton](#), and others.

### GENERAL PURPOSE PEER GROUPS

Some local government general-purpose peer support groups in Oregon may discuss community engagement along with other local governance issues. Some examples we heard about include groups of the city managers in Washington County and Clackamas County, and the [Oregon Planners Network](#).

### PEER NETWORKING IN STATE GOVERNMENT

We were not able to find evidence of any community engagement peer support groups in Oregon State government. Sadie Carney, the DLCD community engagement lead, said she was unaware of any formal or informal networks of state agency community engagement staff. She noted that such networks could be a valuable resource for state staff who support local governments in their community engagement efforts. We see this as a potential opportunity.

### FOUNDATIONS AND FUNDING ORGANIZATIONS

Certain philanthropic foundations have identified community engagement, participatory democracy, and community organizing as primary focuses for their research, funding, and support. They often act as convenors to help people doing community engagement work around the country connect with each other. They also fund and shape broad thinking about community engagement, and support research and innovative projects and programs nationwide.

This section describes three national organizations—Kettering Foundation, Kellogg Foundation, and Philanthropy for Active Civic Engagement (PACE)—and one organization based in Oregon, North Star

Civic Foundation. This is not intended to be a comprehensive list of community engagement focused foundations, but only to give some examples of foundations that can help local government leaders and staff find support and networks to build their community engagement capacity.

## KETTERING FOUNDATION

The [Kettering Foundation](#) is the most active foundation in the United States that supports research on civic engagement. Kettering convenes people from all aspects of civic engagement work, including local officials, researchers and academics, non-profit organizations, government agencies, community engagement practitioners, and community activists. Kettering also is a major funder of research projects that explore and document innovative practices and projects around the world.

The foundation describes itself as being “rooted in the American tradition of cooperative research. Kettering’s primary research question is, what does it take to make democracy work as it should? Kettering’s research is distinctive because it is conducted from the perspective of citizens and focuses on what people can do collectively to address problems affecting their lives, their communities, and their nation.”

Kettering’s approach to research is “learning with, not experimenting on, real citizens, communities and institutions.” They work “primarily through learning exchanges and other collaborative research with civic organizations, communities, and institutions that are experimenting with ways to strengthen democracy. Those involved in these exchanges trade their experiences for insights that Kettering has collected from past exchanges with a wide range of groups from around the world.” Kettering often will fund small research projects to capture the ideas and experiences of “people and organizations who are trying to do something in their own communities...” The foundation offers its own “insights and arresting questions in exchange for what our partners are observing and learning in public life.” Kettering supports this joint learning most often by “convening research exchanges at the foundation, where we bring together our staff and those we’re learning with to trade their experiences for insights that Kettering has collected from past exchanges with a wide range of people and groups from around the world.”

Kettering offers a wealth of resources related to civic and community engagement. The online Kettering Library has links to reports and publications that document previous Kettering research and partnerships around the world. The Kettering Review is “a journal of ideas and activities dedicated to improving the quality of public life in American Democracy.” The library also features the foundation’s annual journal, which summarizes their work around an annual theme.

For example:

- 2020: The Work of Democratic Citizenship
- 2019: Exploring the Relationship Between the Public and Government
- 2018: Experiments in Organizational Innovation
- 2017: Experiments in Democratic Citizenship

We spoke with Valerie Lemmie, Director of Exploratory Research. Lemmie leads the Kettering Foundation’s work and projects focusing on “government work” and interactions between community members and government. She provided an overview of the major actors and trends in local government community engagement thinking, and examples of innovative work around the country.



Kettering is always looking for local efforts to improve democratic practice and encourage civic engagement. Government leaders and staff who are interested in exploring a partnership with Kettering to document a local community engagement program are project can start [here](#).

### **W. K. KELLOGG FOUNDATION**

The [W. K. Kellogg Foundation](#), founded in 1930, is one of the largest philanthropic foundations in the country. The foundation’s mission is to support “children, families and communities as they strengthen and create conditions that propel vulnerable children to achieve success as individuals and as contributors to the larger community and society.”

In a letter on the Kellogg Foundation website, President and CEO La June Montgomery Tabron asserted that in these challenging times, “Thriving children, working families, equitable communities—those remain our priorities. Community engagement, developing leadership, racial equity and racial healing are fundamental and embedded in every layer of our work.”

Over the years, Kellogg has funded projects that explore or support community engagement in local communities across the country.

### **PHILANTHROPY FOR ACTIVE CIVIC ENGAGEMENT**

[Philanthropy for Active Civic Engagement \(PACE\)](#) is an organization of funders that seek “to maximize their impact on democracy and civic life in the United States.” PACE states that its members “share a belief that America will be healthier and more successful, resilient, and productive, if democracy is strong and the office of citizen is treated as central to how it functions,” and that “American democracy will thrive when all of its people are informed and engaged in the process of creating it.”

PACE’s long list of member foundations represents organizations from around the country. The list features some familiar names including the Kettering Foundation, the Kellogg Foundation, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, and Oregon Humanities.

PACE’s programmatic work focuses on increasing capacity in the funding community. PACE supports relationship building among funders, provides on-site learning experiences that helps funders “collectively wrestle with and learn from civic engagement models,” coordinates efforts to pool funding or support collective work, shares learning from these experiments, supports research on the “state of civic philanthropy in America,” and seeks to “seed conversations, learning and action among anyone who has an interest in civic engagement and democracy in the United States.”

PACE has a Civic Engagement Primer that walks other foundations through questions that include: What is civic engagement? How is it defined and what does it look like? How might civic engagement relate to my work? How do I get started? Who might I learn from about how to do this work?

PACE’s website includes links to its many webinars on topics related to civic engagement, including:

- Health Equity & Community Safety: How Funders Can Embrace the Power of Youth Civic Engagement
- Democracy and Dialogue: Building Public Trust and Meaningful Online Discourse
- Exploring Civic Learning as a Pathway to Equity & Opportunity
- Philanthropy’s Role in Strengthening America’s Democracy

## NORTH STAR CIVIC FOUNDATION

North Star's vision and strategy are "to create dynamic and collaborative spaces where civic leaders can develop visionary solutions to complex public interest problems." North Star is located in Portland, Oregon. Our project team spoke with Caitlin Baggott Davis, North Star CEO.

**Projects:** North Star states that its projects are "built on partnerships that bring together expertise across multiple communities and disciplines" and that the organization's "collaborative approach helps us see big challenges in new ways and to develop innovative solutions. Backed by impartial research and cross partisan collaborations, our projects help communities build positive change."

**Vibrant Communities Fund:** North Star's "Vibrant Communities Fund" "directs timely support to values centered community engagement." North Star states that "We are proud to support local leaders who educate communities about issues on the ballot, build community organizing power, drive voter turnout and participation, and provide election protections and support for absentee voters." North Star selects "organizations with a track record of effective and innovative community engagement."

**Democracy and Civic Health Ecosystem:** North Star is thinking beyond just improving community engagement and developing collaborative governance skills in government leaders. They have developed a broad vision of the full range of work needed to build "civic health" in communities. North Star has identified an "ecosystem" of different organizations and activities they believe is needed to support and drive civic health. Baggott Davis shared a graphic that identifies and defines the six elements of this ecosystem:

## Democracy and Civic Health Ecosystem

What ecosystem of organizations and activities supports and drives civic health?



North Star Civic Foundation, 2021

Baggot Davis described the context for North Star's creation of this ecosystem as follows:

Following a year of systemic threats to democracy in the United States, North Star Civic Foundation spent the winter of 2020 evaluating the broader ecosystem of activities and organizations that serve to support a healthy, inclusive, and resilient democracy. We built this

model to guide our investments and help us think about where Oregon’s civic ecosystem may require attention.

While the policies that govern voter registration and participation are critical ingredients for an equitable democracy, the work to sustain our democracy is far broader than those policies. It also includes the attitudes and values with which elected leaders govern and communities come together to find solutions to public interest problems; the ability for community members from a broad range of communities to serve their communities in many elected roles; the resources and capacity for community-based groups to organize and build power; shared cultural beliefs about the value of democracy and democratic institutions and processes; and the stewardship of community-minded residents, from civics education in middle schools, to a functioning independent media, to lifelong opportunities for engagement and civic dialogue that brings people together across difference and builds civic trust.

We have begun to identify organizations and activities in each area of this ecosystem—and also have noted areas where Oregon may lack sufficient civic strength, such as around developing collaborative governance skills in elected leaders, providing broad support for journalism, or investing deeply in community organizing in rural communities and communities of color. In each “column” in the model we ask: What organizations are visibly active in this space? Who else are stakeholders? Who is not represented? What values lead the work in these spaces? How is work in this area funded? Are funds provided equitably and with input and engagement from communities? Where might new investment or engagement have broad impacts across “columns” in the model?

## **CIVIC ORGANIZATIONS**

Local and national civic organizations encourage community engagement in civic life by bringing people together to work on important issues, community assistance, awards, events, research, and publications. This is often described as “community building.”

## **NATIONAL CIVIC LEAGUE**

The National Civic League (NCL) is one of the leading national organizations that supports civic engagement. The NCL states that its mission is to “advance civic engagement to create equitable, thriving communities” by “inspiring, supporting and recognizing inclusive approaches to community decision making.” The NCL “applies civic engagement principles” through its key programs, including:

- **Community Assistance:** The NCL “facilitates strategic planning processes, community engagement trainings, and development of local engagement plans and materials helping local governments and institutions engage and involve residents in ways that lead to tangible outcomes.”
- **All-America City Award:** “Since 1949, the National Civic League has recognized and celebrated the best in American civic innovation with the prestigious All-America City Award.” Each year, the NCL bestows the Award “on 10 communities (more than 500 in all)” to recognize “the work of communities in using inclusive civic engagement to address critical issues and create stronger connections among residents, businesses and nonprofit and government leaders.” The NCL encourages communities to attend the NCL’s monthly Promising Practices Webinar series “to learn from previous winners and other communities about their innovative projects and about the application process.” (Some Oregon communities have won this award.)

- **Research and Publications:** The NCL offers an extensive clearinghouse for “information and other resources in the of field of civic affairs. Some of these resources include:
  - **National Civic Review:** The National Civic Review is full of articles about community engagement trends, issues, and practices (described in “Journals and other Publications” below).
  - **Promising Practices Database:** The “Promising Practices Database” “includes summaries of projects that leverage civic engagement from All-America Cities and other communities.”
  - **Civic Index:** The NCL Civic Index guides communities in how to measure their community’s “civic capital—the formal and informal relationships, networks and capacities that enable communities to solve problems and thrive” and can be used to “spark conversation about community strengths and areas in need of improvement.” The current (4th) edition includes a “specific focus on equity and engagement.”
  - **All-America Conversations Toolkit:** This toolkit guides local communities in having “conversations that engage residents in talking about the kind of community they want and what it will take to get there.”
  - **Model City Charter:** The Model City Charter “serves as a ‘blueprint’ for communities seeking to draft or revise their own home-rule charters. Valerie Lemmie and Wendy Willis, who both serve on the NCL board of directors, shared with us that the NCL currently is updating the Model City Charter to better reflect up-to-date ideas on issues such as social equity, public engagement, the use of technology and social media and new roles for elected and appointed leaders. The NCL expects to have this language ready by November 2021.
  - **Community Visioning and Strategic Planning Handbook:** NCL’s handbook helps “communities convene diverse groups of stakeholders to envision and implement ambitious goals for the future with an inclusive process for planning and decision-making.”
  - **Making Participation Legal:** A guide for local governments on how to update their legal guidelines that may “stifle innovations and discourage public officials and employees from reaching out to citizens” to better support “a wide range of participatory meeting formats and dynamic online tools.” This resource includes a “model public participation ordinance for local governments.”
  - **Model Executive Orders to Secure Equity:** NCL researched local executive orders and ordinances “designed to improve equity and inclusiveness” that can serve as models for local ordinances and other public policies. (<https://www.nationalcivicleague.org/>)

## NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON CITIZENSHIP

The National Conference on Citizenship (NCoC) is a non-profit organization chartered by Congress in 1953. NCoC’s mission is to strengthen civic life in America “through a nationwide network of partners involved in a cutting edge civic health initiative...cross sector conferences and engagement with a broad spectrum of individuals and organizations interested in utilizing civic engagement principles and practices to enhance their work.”

The NCoC’s Civic Health Index is central to the organization’s work. NCoC describes civic health “as the way that communities are organized to define and address public problems. Communities with strong indicators of civic health have higher employment rates, stronger schools, better physical health, and more responsive governments.” NCoC documents state and community level civic health across the nation and “has documented the state of civic life in America in city, state and national Civic Health Index (CHI) reports.” NCoC states that, “CHI partnerships have changed the way governments go about their work, reintroduced civics to our classrooms, redirected investments, influenced national and local conversations resulting in enhancing civic life, and bolstered a network of civic leaders across the

country.” In addition to hosting its Annual Conference on Citizenship, NCoC also “partners with institutions to host and convene programs, events, webinars, and discussions throughout the year.” (<https://ncoc.org/>)

### **LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS**

The League of Women Voters (LWV) was created in 1920 to support women playing a larger role in public affairs after women won the right to vote. In 1973 the League charter was amended to include men. The League is non-partisan and does not support or oppose political candidates or parties. The organization “encourages informed and active participation in government, works to increase understanding of major public policy issues, and influences public policy through education and advocacy.” The League mission is: “Empowering voters. Defending Democracy.” Its vision is: “We envision a democracy where every person has the desire, the right, the knowledge and the confidence to participate.” Its value is: “We believe in the power of women to create a more perfect democracy.” LWV chapters are active in 700 communities in all 50 states. The League actively supports civic engagement, especially access to voting. (<https://www.lwv.org/>)

### **LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF OREGON**

League of Women Voters of Oregon (LWVOR) seeks to encourage “informed and active participation in government in order to build better communities statewide” and to “influence public policy through education and advocacy, and to provide support for League members and the League organization.”

Oregon is also home to 15 [local local League chapters](#), including: Clackamas County, Coos County, Corvallis, Curry County, Deschutes County, Klamath County, Lane County, Lincoln County, Linn County, Marion/Polk Counties, Portland, Rogue Valley, Umpqua Valley, Washington County, and West Umatilla County. These local organizations host forums and sometimes engage in studies that investigate and advocate for strong local community engagement and DEI efforts.

### **CITY CLUBS**

City Clubs are organizations of community members that host forums for speakers on important local and statewide issues, engage members in issue research, and build leadership capacity among their members. Among those active in Oregon are:

- [City Club of Central Oregon](#)
- [City Club of Eugene](#)
- [City Club of Portland](#)
- [Salem City Club](#)

### **JOURNALS AND OTHER PUBLICATIONS**

Some journals focus on issues of civic participation and community engagement. They are invaluable resources for articles on new theories and issues, the latest trends and techniques, and case studies of successful practices. Publications by local government organizations and professional associations also publish occasional articles related to community engagement. A couple good journals focused specifically on civic and community engagement include:

## NATIONAL CIVIC REVIEW

*The National Civic Review* is published by the National Civic League. The publication states that its “case studies, report, interviews and essays help communities learn about the latest development in collaborative problem solving, civic engagement, local government innovation and democratic governance. Some of the country’s leading doers and thinkers have contributed articles to this invaluable resource for elected officials, public managers, nonprofit leaders, grassroots activists, and public administration scholars seeking to make America’s communities more inclusive, participatory, innovative and successful.” (<https://www.nationalcivicleague.org/national-civic-review/>)

## JOURNAL OF DELIBERATIVE DEMOCRACY

*The Journal of Deliberative Democracy* “publishes articles that shape the course of scholarship on deliberative democracy. It is the forum for the latest thinking, emerging debates, alternative perspectives, as well as critical views on deliberation,” and it “aims to be the platform to broker knowledge between scholars and practitioners of citizen engagement.” The Journal is supported by the newDemocracy Foundation, the Deliberative Democracy Consortium, and IAP2. (<https://delibdemjournal.org/>)

## RESEARCH AND INFORMATION CLEARINGHOUSES

### PARTICIPEDIA

Many of the organizations cited in this section collect and provide information on community engagement research, best practices, and case studies. One source devoted specifically to providing this sort of information worldwide is [Participedia](#), which describes itself as “a global network and crowdsourcing platform for researchers, educators, practitioners, policy makers, activists, and anyone interested in public participation and democratic innovations.”

## FEDERAL GOVERNMENT SUPPORT

Federal government agencies have requirements around public participation for a variety of programs and projects implemented by local jurisdictions. They also offer training, support, and guidance to help local governments comply with these rules and regulations.

As noted earlier, the U.S Department of Transportation and the Federal Transit Administration require local Metropolitan Planning Organizations to develop a [Public Participation Plan](#) for their transportation plans and improvement programs. The agency offers resources to aid local jurisdictions in meeting this requirement.

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) provides detailed [guidance to local governments](#) on public participation, and to community members with respect to [environmental justice](#) and the [assessment of environmental impacts](#) for local projects subject to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

Even where it is not a matter of legal compliance, federal agencies like the [National Park Service](#) often provide resources to encourage and support community engagement by local governments.

Disaster preparedness is a focus of community engagement for many local governments, often with guidance from the federal government. [Local Emergency Planning Committees \(LEPCs\)](#) are community based organizations that assist in preparing for emergencies, particularly those concerning hazardous materials. The EPA provides [online training](#) to local governments to help them implement the [Emergency Planning and Community Right-to-Know Act \(EPCRA\)](#). The Federal Emergency Management

Agency (FEMA) [Community Emergency Response Team \(CERT\)](#) program educates volunteers about disaster preparedness for the hazards that may impact their local area and trains them in basic disaster response skills.

The federal [Plain Language Guidelines](#) give direction to all government agencies about clear writing to help community members “find what they need, understand what they find, and use what they find to meet their needs.”

## **OREGON STATE GOVERNMENT SUPPORT**

Oregon state government affects local government community engagement through state requirements, programs, and funding for local projects. While our project did not have the capacity to do a thorough review of how state government affects community engagement, we did look at the community engagement requirements of Oregon’s state land use planning system and the roles of the Department of Land Conservation and Development (DLCD) and Land Conservation and Development Commission (LCDC). A more thorough examination of Oregon state government community engagement policies, requirements, capacity, and training opportunities would be very useful.

This section looks at statewide community engagement policies in Oregon, DLCD/LCDC community engagement policies and support programs, and other Oregon state agencies. The State of Oregon does not have an overarching community engagement policy that requires or encourages local governments to use community engagement best practices to engage their communities in decision making.

## **PUBLIC MEETINGS, NOTIFICATIONS, AND RULE MAKING**

The State of Oregon has requirements related to [public meetings, public records, and formal notification](#). The Oregon Attorney General also established [Model Rules for Rulemaking](#) that require public input. While these requirements are useful, they generally do not rise to the level of community engagement best practices as described above.

## **OREGON STATEWIDE PLANNING GOAL 1**

Oregon’s land use planning system was adopted in the 1970s and has been a national model for state government land use planning policies ever since. It requires all cities and counties to adopt comprehensive plans.

As part of their comprehensive plans, “Goal 1: Citizen Involvement” requires local jurisdictions to “develop a citizen involvement program that ensures the opportunity for citizens to be involved in all phases of the planning process.” One element of the program is an “officially recognized committee for citizen involvement” that broadly represents the geographic areas and interests of the community. The committee must assist local leaders in developing and implementing the community involvement program, although city councils or county commissions (or their planning commissions) may act as the committee (<https://www.oregon.gov/lcd/OP/Pages/Goal-1.aspx>)

Goal 1 acts as a statutory driver for local governments to engage their communities in their comprehensive planning and land use decision making, but it does not ensure actions that could be considered necessary for high-quality community engagement, including equitable outreach, effective two-way communication, opportunities for community members to influence all phases of the planning process, adequate technical information in an understandable form, feedback mechanisms by which policy makers respond to public input, or adequate human, financial, and informational resources to

support the effort. Revisions to Goal 1 were proposed in 2021 to address some of these deficits (see below).

### **OREGON DEPARTMENT OF LAND CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT (DLCD) LAND CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION (LCDC)**

The Oregon Department of Land Conservation and Development (DLCD) and the Oregon Land Conservation and Development Commission (LCDC) support and oversee local comprehensive planning efforts, including the implementation of Goal 1. Our project team interviewed DLCD Deputy Director Kristen Greene and Sadie Carney, DLCD policy analyst and communications director who also staffs the DLCDs Citizen Involvement Advisory Committee (CIAC).

Both Greene and Carney noted that DLCD has increased its focus on community engagement in recent years. DLCD hired Greene as deputy director. Greene brings to DLCD her years of experience as a consultant supporting local government community engagement in visioning and planning processes. Her senior position in the agency has allowed her to elevate the focus on equity and community engagement in the agency's work. DLCD also hired Carney to serve as the agency's "Goal 1 expert."<sup>29</sup>

One example of Greene's effect on elevating community engagement at DLCD is her success in convincing DLCD to significantly expand the membership and diversity of its Climate Friendly and Equitable Communities rulemaking committee.<sup>30</sup> Greene said that DLCD now identifies "priority populations" for different projects and referred us to the list of priority populations identified in Governor Brown's "State of Oregon Equity Framework in COVID-19 Response and Recovery." Greene also emphasized the importance of not expecting community-based organizations to participate on DLCD committees without compensation—she said these organizations have their own missions that do not include DLCD's work. DLCD is currently paying stipends to some committee members from community-based organizations. Greene also stressed the importance of using a skilled facilitator. Both Greene and Carney referenced gaps in community engagement that have existed for many years in Oregon's land use planning system. They noted that Oregon's land use system was designed by and intended to meet the needs of people who were white, relatively affluent, and well educated. Greene acknowledged that expanding engagement in land use planning to people who historically have not been engaged is expensive and difficult, and that DLCD needs staff and support to do this work.

Greene shared that DLCD currently has limited staff capacity to support local government community engagement. She noted that DLCD has not been able to do much community engagement training for local government leaders and staff. Beyond a briefing for LCDC, DLCD also has not been able to publicize the updated 2019 version of the Putting the People into Planning guidebook for local government officials at the time of this writing.

#### ***Citizen Involvement Advisory Committee (CIAC)***

Oregon state land use planning law (ORS 197.160) established the Citizen Involvement Advisory Committee (CIAC) to "assure widespread citizen involvement in all phases of the planning process." The law requires LCDC to appoint a "State Citizen Involvement Advisory Committee" and requires that

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<sup>29</sup> Carney was very familiar with the work of CIAC when DLCD hired her. She had served as a volunteer member and vice chair of CIAC before she was hired by DLCD.

<sup>30</sup> "The Climate Friendly and Equitable Communities rulemaking will be developing proposed amendments to Oregon Administrative Rules that will require cities and counties to submit regular reports on local actions and regional performance increasing equity and reducing climate pollution."  
<https://www.oregon.gov/lcd/LAR/Pages/CFEC.aspx>



committee to “develop a program for the commission that promotes and enhances public participation in the adoption and amendment of the [Oregon state] planning goals and guidelines.”

State law requires cities and counties to periodically update their comprehensive plans and engage their communities in that process. CIAC reviews the proposed language of each local government Goal 1 comprehensive plan community engagement program, and to advise LCDC “whether or not the proposed program adequately provides for public involvement in the planning process” and, if it does not, “in what respects it is inadequate.”

CIAC does other work beyond this primary formal task. In 2019, it completed a major update of [Putting the People in Planning](#), a guide to the community engagement requirements of Oregon’s statewide planning law for local government officials and community members. It includes a tool kit to help local agencies “successfully engage the public as they develop and implement important land use plans.” It is intended to help them “improve public participation in many other areas of government service as well.” CIAC recognizes good practices by local governments through its Achievement in Community Engagement (ACE) award program. In 2019, CIAC also developed guidelines for LCDC and DLCD on how they involve the community in policy development “consistent with and in some cases beyond the legal requirements of the Attorney General’s Model Rules of Procedure, state law, and [LCDC’s] administration Rules.”

Carney and the CIAC members have worked to make participation on CIAC more accessible to a broader diversity of people across the state. CIAC shifted to meeting online (even before COVID-19) instead of requiring committee members to drive to Salem from across the state for each meeting. CIAC also has identified “priority populations” to guide recruitment of new CIAC members.

Carney observed that there is a “real deficit” in community engagement training and outreach. She said she has also heard this from local government associations like LOC and AOC, and from DLCD field office staff. She noted that CIAC does not have the capacity to offer training or consultation to local leaders and staff, or to encourage widespread use of the resources it develops. All the members are volunteers. DLCD staff support for CIAC is limited. For instance, Carney’s support for CIAC is only a part of her broader policy analysis and communications responsibilities.

### ***DLCD Field Offices***

DLCD field offices provide technical support to local governments as they develop their comprehensive plans. Carney said that DLCD field office staff are the agency’s most valuable staff members. She said they have a personal touch with local governments and familiarity with local conditions and issues. Carney noted that DLCD field office staff mostly focus on supporting local governments in more technical work on planning goals related to transportation, housing, and the many other state planning goals rather than Goal 1. She was not aware of any special training that field office staff had received on how to support community engagement. Carney supported Greene’s suggestion that an effective use of DLCD resources in this area would be to have Carney provide train-the-trainer training for DLCD district office staff to allow them to provide some level of community engagement capacity building and support to the local governments in their districts.

### ***Peer Resource Sharing***

Carney observed that one challenge is how to make people aware of the community engagement tools that are out there. She said that every local government should not have to “invent a wheel to make this happen.” Carney said that a system is needed to make sure that “we all have access to tools that benefit everyone and can capitalize on one another’s knowledge and experience and work.” Carney shared that

she is not aware of any network of community engagement people around the state or at other state agencies. She observed that such a network across state government would be helpful. She wondered who would convene such a group and support its role as a resource body.

### *Proposed Update of Goal 1*

In 2021, the Oregon Legislature considered [HB2488](#), a bill to rename and update the Goal 1 Citizen Involvement requirements. It did not pass in the 2021 legislative session. The bill emphasized environmental justice and would have required local governments to ensure that land use planning and decision-making processes are accessible to “disadvantaged groups.” It also required all Oregon cities and counties to update the Goal 1 language in their comprehensive plans, and it directed all state agencies to update their coordinating agreements with DLCDC to ensure that their land use planning activities comply with the new requirements. DLCDC is considering the possibility of performing an update without funding, but a heavy legislative policy agenda in 2021 means that any action will likely be on a longer timeline.

### *Proposed Expansion of Formal Notification Requirements*

In 2021, HB 2556 “Notice for All” sought to require local governments to send formal notices not only to property owners but also to residents including renters. Although the bill was not adopted, Aaron Ray, OAPA president, told us that legislation and administrative rules to improve notification statewide would be helpful. He said some local governments already have expanded their notification systems on their own. Ray said that the development of model notification code language that still meets state requirements would be helpful to local governments.

## **OTHER OREGON STATE AGENCIES**

Like DLCDC, other state agencies also have staff who interact with local government leaders and staff. Some agencies have formal field offices located around the state. These agencies often establish requirements for local government policies and programs and establish requirements for projects paid for with state funds. Different systems of state government field offices could provide a vehicle by which state staff could provide some level of support to local governments in effectively engaging their communities on projects related to a particular state agency’s work if they had appropriate training and access to resources. For instance, Jeanne Lawson with JLA noted that ODOT projects come with some basic process requirements that local governments must follow when they receive state funding for local transportation projects. ODOT also has field offices across the state.

Carney observed that some state agencies have much more robust community engagement programs and more resources to support these activities than DLCDC. She mentioned the Oregon Health Authority and Oregon Department of Human Services.

A deeper look at community engagement activities and capacity at different state agencies would be useful.

## **EQUITY FRAMEWORK FOR COVID-19**

In 2020, Governor Kate Brown issued the State of Oregon Equity Framework in COVID-19 Response and Recovery. The Equity Framework requires state agencies to engage with diverse communities through “inclusive communications” and “community-informed policy and partnerships.” This includes engaging and centering “diverse community stakeholders and local leaders across the state to be an essential part of the data-informed-decision-making process.” The framework also directs state agencies to “Build on and collaborate with the trusted network of community-based organizational partners to lead in policy making and ensure that we proactively address policy gaps.”

## Examples from Local Jurisdictions

### CITIES

We began this project as a survey of training programs in Oregon. As we conducted our interviews, we discovered a more nuanced picture of how local governments build their capacity for community engagement. This section describes some examples as reported by people we interviewed. They are brief snapshots that should be taken as leads for further investigation. There are undoubtedly many more examples of good work that we did not discover through our interviews.

Each of the cases in this section illustrates one or more practices that could be applied by other jurisdictions. It is notable that the cities of Milwaukie, Independence, and Tualatin seem to be working intentionally toward an organizational culture and program that we describe earlier as the highest level on a spectrum of government approaches to community engagement.

A more rigorous analysis of community engagement programs and activities in cities throughout Oregon would be extremely valuable—to share experiences across jurisdictions, describe organizational models, and collect feedback from local governments about the kind of support that would be most useful to them. We heard repeatedly that local governments pay close attention to what works in other communities as a main source of learning. This suggests that case studies should be prioritized for future research. They are the basis for identifying best practices, developing general guides and resources, and informing training curricula and consultation.

**Beaverton:** After he left his position in Cornelius, Dave Waffle worked for Beaverton as a project manager and city liaison to Metro on regional issues. He secured a federal grant to develop health policies in the community. Building on his experience in Cornelius, the city conducted community surveys in five languages. This led to a new chapter on community health in the city's Comprehensive Plan, which addressed housing, wrap-around services, food deserts, and community gardens. The city also partnered with [Virginia Garcia Memorial Health Center](#), [Pacific University](#), and mental health agencies. Waffle stressed the value of the community surveys, which helped lead to smoke-free campuses, facilities, and parks.

**Cornelius:** Former city manager Dave Waffle told us about the city's effort to engage families who had children with disabilities, most of whom spoke Spanish as their preferred language. They began in 2006 by holding an event at a Catholic church, which already offered a mass for people with disabilities. He said he learned the value of working with community elders, who can provide acknowledgement and affirmation of your project and can signal to the community the need to participate in the public process. He affirmed the importance of food in helping to bring people together (and the less well-known skill of balancing a plate of mole on your lap while engaging). The project produced videos about the lack of sidewalks and how families can advocate for their needs. Over eight or nine years, the city worked closely with [Virginia Garcia Memorial Health Center](#), leading to much better cooperation and coordination with that important community institution, school districts, and other agencies. These relationships changed the way the city did business and engaged with the community, with multiple positive impacts: more bilingual public meetings, more Latino representation on city council, more sidewalks and park improvements, changes to health policy in response to community needs, greater fund raising for a new library, and, anecdotally, better relationships with the police. Waffle said this

work left a legacy, as his successor remains committed to engaging the community based on the strong relationships and trust built over time.

**Florence:** We spoke with Megan Messmer, assistant city manager and public information officer. She discussed a variety of recent initiatives to engage the community that mark a departure from the past, including the city's first community attitude survey, a 125th anniversary block party, National Night Out, a community policing event, a block party and ice cream social, and a digital scavenger hunt.

She emphasized that while Florence is a tourist destination, these festivals are targeted to residents as community building events. The city works with schools and other agencies on some of these events to help bridge the gap between different populations and help people understand the relationship between the city and special districts for emergency preparedness. She said the city is considering developing a citizen's academy to educate community members about the city and create a pipeline to service on city committees.

Messmer discussed the importance of building trust in different ways: being present in the community, providing helpful information, keeping people informed about the progress of projects during "quiet" design phases. She said some staff are afraid to engage because people might get angry with them as representatives of the city. She reassures them that she "has their back" and sets an example by standing up for her work and letting them know that they "deserve to be treated as human beings" and it's not okay for people to yell and cuss at them. She believes the personal benefit of engaging confidently is that you take pride in your work, and it becomes rewarding and fun to "wear the shirt with the logo and be in the know" while you help people.

Messmer also talked about the challenges of persuading elected officials of the benefits of community engagement in an organization that has traditionally had a "head down, do your work" culture. The fact that you are not hearing complaints or seeing problems does not mean they are not happening, just that you are not paying attention. She said that engaged community members can also become allies and help to build trust in government. She described how a city manager and mayor supportive of engagement have helped to change the culture. Our conversation illustrated the impact that one or two individuals can have within a smaller organization. It also reaffirmed our conclusion that leadership support is necessary for sustained engagement, and the fact that Messmer has worked in different positions in the city manager's office for eight years has helped her individual talents influence the city's culture around community engagement.

**Garibaldi:** The city faced well-publicized challenges with corrupt practices by some of its leaders. We spoke with Mayor Tim Hall, who was elected in part to address these problems and refocus city government on serving the community. Hall said it is difficult to recruit members for city committees, and that a basic "Know Your Government" program would help the community understand how government works and how it should work. As he noted, "When people are kept in the dark they don't know" how budgets are developed or where their taxes go. He said that a challenge of engaging people in the work of government is that Garibaldi is a small coastal community comprised largely of retirees who want to buy a house and go fishing. Hall said that one of his public engagement goals is to increase community involvement in the planning of popular events like the city's annual festival.

Hall is familiar with trainings offered by the League of Oregon Cities and the National League of Cities. Hall in the past served on the IAP2 Cascade Chapter board and encouraged IAP2 to expand its outreach to smaller communities in Oregon. He believes council members would benefit from community

engagement training, but it only makes sense if they are willing to participate (which is an open question). Hall's insights are also informed by his past role as a community engagement manager for the City of Portland.

**Independence:** The City of Independence has successfully “knitted together”<sup>31</sup> many of the key components of a robust community engagement program and culture. Independence has a diverse population of just over 10,000 people with a wide range of incomes; about forty percent of Independence residents are Latino. Mayor John McArdle and City Manager Tom Pessemier talked with us about the city's approach to community engagement.

Community engagement in Independence is guided by strong overarching values. McArdle and Pessemier stressed the importance of listening to the community. They said city council members and staff have a “servant attitude” and focus on “doing what people want you to do.” The city also strives to hear from the broader community and identify broader community interests, not just the loudest voices. McArdle said, “We want to work with the community.”

The city uses formal visioning processes as a major tool to engage the community and set priorities. In 2018 and 2019, the city worked with the community to create the [Independence Vision 2040](#) process that currently guides the city's work. The city used a wide range of effective and innovative techniques to engage community members in the development of this plan.

The city has committed significant resources to build a strong formal community outreach program. Several years ago the city created a position dedicated to community engagement and is now adding a separate communications position.

The city prioritizes engaging its large population of Latino residents. The current community engagement manager, Ramon Martinez, has taken the lead on engagement with Latino community members and has become the “go-to guy” for the Latino community to connect with the city.

McArdle and Pessemier noted that Independence is not well served by traditional mass media—no radio, TV, or newspapers focus specifically on Independence. They stressed the importance of the city recognizing the different communities within Independence and developing strategies to reach and engage them.

The strong community engagement culture in Independence grew over time. Pessemier noted that support from the mayor, city council and community gives the city manager and city staff “freedom to go and actually do what the community wants to get done” as opposed to the top-down governance approach “where you're trying to force projects on the community that the community doesn't really care about.”

In 2014, Independence was one of ten U.S. cities honored in 2014 as an [All-America City](#) by the National Civic League. In 2018, Independence received the Oregon League of Cities' [Award for Excellence](#) “for revitalizing a rural community through attitude, engagement and alignment.”

**John Day:** We interviewed city manager Nick Green. He explained that the city is faced with substantial demographic changes as younger families move to the city and more people commute from surrounding communities to work in the city. He described the city's strategy for growth and economic revitalization,

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<sup>31</sup> Professor Phillip Cooper used the term “knitting together” to describe the innovative work by former Independence City Manager David Clyne to integrate the city's many different community engagement efforts.

involving fundraising to redevelop brownfields, dramatically increasing the city budget and staffing, and taking an entrepreneurial approach to government. He highlighted the city's use of public funds to create the first [municipally owned greenhouse](#) in the country, which the city proposes to [convert to a co-op](#) in order to access other revenue sources and help the community “feel like this is their asset and not some government project.”

Green said the city uses public involvement best practices (“operating by the book”) to implement plans that are often controversial. He described the city's approach as apolitical and based on diversity, inclusiveness, transparency, online engagement, and an open public process that “gives people a reason to show up.” The city's capacity to conduct extensive outreach and engagement comes from a mix of staff (particularly younger employees willing to network in the community), consultants paid with grant funding, the in-house expertise of state and federal partners, and community volunteers who become grassroots advocates.

According to several people we interviewed for this report, the strategy has been extraordinarily successful in moving projects forward, gaining the support of elected officials, and bringing new voices into the public process. While rapid change has intensified opposition from some longtime residents, Green believes that constructive participation by most community members is driving the future direction of the city, and that broad-based engagement will reveal what is best for the community. He pointed us to a directory of the city's [master plans](#) that shows broad participation in each initiative, including the RERC Action Plan— Goal 8 Update (2020), John Day Innovation Gateway Area Plan (2019), and the John Day Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy—Goal 9 Update (2019).

**Lake Oswego:** Scott Lazenby, former city manager, told us about the [D Avenue Improvement Project](#), which was recognized as the 2019 Project of the Year by the Oregon Chapter of the American Public Works Administration. Professor Lazenby reported that the project created a mile of sidewalks, new streetscapes, rain gardens, and roadway improvements in an older neighborhood. The proposal was controversial because some residents who were influential in formal neighborhood associations believed that sidewalks would hurt the neighborhood's rural feel.

Staff took a proactive approach to community engagement—“pounding the pavement,” conducting walking tours, distributing postcard surveys widely with a tailored version to residents on the affected streets, holding community forums, and providing various opportunities for written and oral feedback. The outreach revealed that more recent residents favored sidewalks and it resulted in a customized design sensitive to individual needs (e.g., preserving parking spots and saving certain trees). The solution was still opposed by a small number of vocal individuals, but staff were able to refer to the city's [Citizen Involvement Guidelines](#) requiring balanced membership in neighborhood associations. Professor Lazenby said that the process “was not cheap,” but it was the right way to engage the community and allowed the city to deliver the project.

Apart from this project, he also noted that the city has found it valuable to hold ice cream socials or other events where they block off streets, council members and staff in mingle with community members, children touch fire trucks, etc. This creates a more positive and casual atmosphere than at city business meetings, but where people can still learn about the work of government and how to stay engaged. It reflects a general best practice of “meeting people where they are.”

**Milwaukie:** The City of Milwaukie has created one of the most comprehensive city government community engagement strategies and programs in Oregon, placing it at the top level of our community engagement spectrum. Some hallmarks of the city's approach include:

- Strong support from leadership for community engagement: Mayor Mark Gamba, city council members, and City Manager Ann Ober.
- A focus on building capacity citywide through regular meetings of community engagement staff from different departments and the use of a community engagement manual to support consistency across projects.
- A dedicated staff member, Community Engagement Coordinator Jason Wachs, to help guide and support the overall program.
- Investment in staff skills, with five members recently attending IAP2's weeklong Foundations training.
- A robust communications program to share information through the city's website, social media, and a monthly paper newsletter sent to all residents.
- An online engagement platform—[Engage Milwaukie](#)—designed and moderated with support from the consulting firm [Bang the Table](#).
- Sponsorship of fun events and volunteer opportunities to engage community members.
- An integrated and coordinated approach to supporting boards and commissions, a citywide neighborhood association system.
- Coordination with a variety of local organizations to reach diverse communities.
- Use of demographic data and other information about the community to identify groups to engage and develop effective engagement strategies.
- Strategic work with consultants to augment the city's in-house community engagement capacity. In 2018, the city worked with consulting firm Cogan Owens Greene to design and implement its "Milwaukie All Aboard" community visioning project, which won the League of Oregon Cities' [Good Governance Award](#) that year.
- Recruitment and support of community leaders through the Milwaukie Leadership Academy.
- Use of an annual community survey to solicit feedback from residents on issues, services, and priorities.

In 2020, the city collaborated with the Center for Public Service to do a comprehensive review of its community engagement efforts.

**Portland:** Two of the report authors worked previously for the city. Paul Leistner was the longtime coordinator of the Neighborhood Program, and Greg Greenway served as the coordinator of the Public Involvement Best Practices Program. We also interviewed Aaron Abrams, Community Outreach and Public Involvement Program Manager for the Bureau of Environmental Services. The largest city in the state, Portland is an example of a highly institutionalized approach to community engagement.

The City Council adopted [Public Involvement Principles](#) in 2010. The City's [Public Involvement Advisory Council \(PIAC\)](#) represents an innovative model of collaboration between community volunteers and city staff, recommending policies and guidelines to city council and promoting best practices across city bureaus. In part through PIAC, the city has developed a wide range of [resources](#) over many years to help guide, implement, and assess community engagement efforts. Portland has possibly the most wide-ranging and detailed [Community Involvement chapter](#) of its Comprehensive Plan, supported by a [Community Engagement Manual](#) to guide implementation. Its [Office of Equity and Human Rights](#) offers extensive guidance, education, training, and technical assistance to city bureaus and their staff,

including a [Racial Equity Toolkit](#). Through its [Diversity and Civic Leadership Program](#), the city has worked for more than a decade with BIPOC-led community organizations to design and implement programs that support leadership development and civic engagement. [Engaging for Equity](#) describes the origins of the program and reports on its first seven years.

This kind of institutionalization is essential for any large city with a strong commitment to community involvement, if for no other reason than the population is too large to rely solely on informal networks and relationships to engage the full range of stakeholders who are affected by government decisions. While this structured approach embeds core principles of community engagement in the city and is backed by significant investment and staff capacity, there are inherent challenges in any large organization to apply these resources consistently and effectively. Portland faces the additional challenge of coordinating efforts and standardizing practices across multiple bureaus because its system of government does not include a city manager or central administrator.<sup>32</sup> We address this issue conceptually in the conclusion with respect to a possible “sweet spot” related to city size.

**Tualatin:** We interviewed city manager Sherilyn Lombos, deputy city manager Megan George, and community engagement coordinator Betsy Rodriguez Ruef. They told us that the city’s current community engagement program emerged from the “scar tissue” of an unsuccessful effort to create a downtown urban renewal district a decade ago. In 2009, the city had identified problems, developed solutions, and was prepared to make a significant investment in the project. When they asked the community for input on their proposed solutions, people said they were addressing the wrong problem. It shook the city to lose such a major opportunity because the community didn’t want it.

Lombos said the city did a year of soul searching and went through a painful process to shift their approach. Neighborhood organizations became activated around the failed project, and the city began to work with them more closely. In June 2011, the city council adopted seven [Community Involvement Principles](#), and the following month it created a [Community Involvement Organization \(CIO\) Program](#). The city learned from their experience with the downtown project that the community wanted more consistent outcomes across city initiatives. One response was the passage of a \$20 million bond measure for transportation funding in 2018, and extensive public engagement to develop a list of community priorities ([Tualatin Moving Forward](#)). In 2021, the city adopted the [City Council Vision & Priorities](#) to support an inclusive, connected, informed, and engaged community.

In addition to the CIO program, the city established the non-geographically based [Grupo Tualatinos](#) as another avenue for engagement and representation. The city’s approach has both formal and informal elements. There is a structured relationship with the CIO’s and the city provides staff support to Tualatinos. It has less structured relationships with other community groups. Rodriguez Ruef (the city’s “subject matter expert”) connects CIO’s and community groups to council members and staff, identifies community allies and potential leaders, and plays the role of “matchmaker” in various ways. Flexibility, adaptation, and relationship building appear to be hallmarks of the city’s approach.

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<sup>32</sup> As noted on the City Auditor [webpage](#), “The City of Portland has the last remaining Commission form of government among large cities in the United States.” [NOTE: Since the preparation of this report, Portlanders voted in November 2022 to replace Portland’s commission form of government with a legislative city council of twelve council members from four districts and a mayor who would oversee the executive branch of city government with assistance from a chief administrative officer. The first City election with ranked-choice voting and geographic districts is scheduled for November 2024.]



Our interview reinforced our observation that both consistent leadership and the location of staff within an organization are key success factors for community engagement programs. Elected officials have set standards and expectations through the adoption of the city's vision, principles, and priorities. Lombos has been with the city for nearly fifteen years, and her leadership as city manager has clearly contributed to the evolution of engagement as central to the city's mission. Both George and Rodriguez Ruef report directly to the city manager. The city's investment in staff dedicated to community engagement and relationship building is essential to capacity building, and their access to leadership multiplies the value of that investment.

There are other jurisdictions that were recommended for further research by those we interviewed. We did not investigate or confirm these accounts directly with city representatives because of time constraints, but we want to mention them:

**Cannon Beach:** Community members are highly engaged. While the city has about 1,000 year-round residents, it must plan as though the community has a population of 10,000 because of seasonal tourism.

**Eugene:** [Envision Eugene](#) was the largest community engagement effort ever undertaken by the city. Focused on managing growth to protect and enhance the community's quality of life, the vision included an Urban Growth Boundary that was approved by the state of Oregon in 2017 after seven years of community engagement and technical analysis. We were also encouraged to learn about [Opportunity Village Eugene](#), "a pilot project for a tiny home community that could provide a safe space for people experiencing homelessness to sleep, keep their belongings, participate in a village community, and receive supports to help them stabilize and transition into permanent housing." The Village is located on city public works property.

**McMinnville:** We were encouraged to investigate the city, which reportedly has a strong commitment to public involvement and is addressing challenges in engaging people in the community experiencing homelessness.

**Medford:** We heard that, for a while, the city manager asked council members and top staff to go door to door and ask people, "What's on your mind?" to discover which issues residents care about. While community members appreciated the outreach, it was time consuming, labor intensive, and hard to scale and sustain.

**Monmouth:** We were also encouraged to reach out to the city to learn about its community engagement work but were unable to do so based on our time constraints.

**Salem:** We heard that the city has a strong planning team with effective messaging and service provision, including outreach to the Latino community. We recommend that any future research includes a case study of community engagement in the state capital.

**Sandy:** The city tried to create formal neighborhood associations, but the community was not able to sustain them. As an alternative, council members would attend meetings in different neighborhood areas. Sandy was also credited by one interviewee with providing child care and food to encourage attendance at a town hall focused on the city's large Latino community.

**Tigard:** The city has a [dedicated web portal](#) for community engagement that encourages participation in active city projects and invites input "at times that work best for you." They have staff dedicated to community engagement and reportedly do effective outreach and messaging to the community.

Other cities that our interviewees mentioned as possible cases for future research into their overall approach to community engagement or work on specific projects include **Ashland, Bend, Boardman, Butte Falls, Gladstone, Happy Valley, Wilsonville, Joseph** and **Elgin** (together in collaboration with Eastern Oregon University on the Joseph Branch Trail).

## COUNTIES

It is not surprising that the three most populous counties in Oregon—Multnomah, Washington, and Clackamas—also have the resources to staff significant community engagement programs as a part of their service delivery model. For **Multnomah County**, there is an entire [Office of Community Involvement](#); **Washington County** combines community engagement and equity and inclusion in one office, the [Office of Equity, Inclusion and Community Engagement](#); and **Clackamas County** includes community engagement in their [Public and Government Affairs](#) office. Based on our interview with Amanda Garcia-Snell, it appears that Washington County is making deliberate efforts to build an organizational culture around community engagement that we describe earlier as the highest level on a spectrum of government approaches.

**Polk County** joins these three counties as the only other county in the state with an entire department devoted to community engagement: the [Family and Community Services Department](#) helps connect community members with various services and resources provided by the County or its partners. **Klamath County** includes a general Public Affairs department that says it emphasizes “two-way communication between the County and involved citizens,” though the scope of their community engagement work is unclear from the website.

Several medium-sized counties in Oregon also have various community engagement staff with programmatic lenses. However, the scope of their community engagement efforts generally targets specific services or populations. For instance, **Josephine County** has two staff members with community outreach responsibilities: one in the [Juvenile Justice](#) department and the other focused on the [Emergency Services Program](#). **Jackson County** has several similar positions with programmatic focuses in the areas of [community health education](#) and general community programming. Another example is **Deschutes County**, which offers a free ten-week “[County College](#)” program.

**Clatsop County** is emerging as a jurisdiction in Oregon with programmatic community engagement efforts. There is a community engagement-focused staff member working in the County Manager’s office, and the County’s most recent [strategic plan](#) commits to developing a comprehensive community engagement plan and increasing their capacity for engaging their community beginning in 2021. This presents itself as a potential opportunity for conducting a real-time case study.

Many counties have also developed approaches to community engagement that relate to specific goals, plans or projects, including [Benton](#), [Coos](#), [Curry](#), [Gilliam](#), and Lane (for [parks/open space](#) and [frequent service users](#)).

We do not to assume that the counties not mentioned do not value or practice community engagement. As Dr. Shannon Donovan detailed in our interview with her, many rural counties may simply lack the resources to devote to the development of programmatic community engagement. There also may not be information on counties’ community engagement efforts publicly available. The findings described above were established through a review of each of the counties’ websites, and programs or projects that involve community engagement may not be reflected online.

There are also county employees at all levels of leadership who actively engage with their communities through their regular work even though community engagement may not necessarily be a central focus of their position. Their work is not to be forgotten or diminished, as they are a critical part of the fabric of building capacity to engage their communities.

## ***SPECIAL DISTRICTS***

We did not interview representatives of specific special districts, but we spoke with Frank Stratton, executive director of the [Special Districts Association of Oregon](#) (SDAO). As noted earlier, Stratton explained that special districts have different community engagement needs and challenges than cities or counties because of the kinds of services they provide, the fact that the populations they serve usually cross other jurisdictional boundaries, and the relative lack of awareness of what districts do. He also said that more than half the districts have little or no staff and annual budgets under \$100,000, limiting their engagement capacity. He and others mentioned several cases of special districts and regional agencies that would offer helpful case studies:

### **Clean Water Services**

The water resources management agency responsible for the Tualatin River watershed has reportedly been engaging the community effectively for years. They do regular community surveys and have a long track record of collecting longitudinal data on what community members want for the Tualatin Basin.

### **Tualatin Valley Fire & Rescue**

The agency focuses on engagement to promote a culture of safety in the community and the organization. “Education delivered to residents and businesses motivates their active role in emergency prevention, preparedness, and resilience measures.”

### **Tualatin Hills Park and Recreation District**

The agency conducts ongoing outreach to inform the public about its parks, services, and programs, and engages the public in decision making on a variety of projects to ensure that they reflect community needs and desires.

### **Multnomah County Drainage District**

In partnership with [Cascadia Behavioral Healthcare](#), the agency launched a program to address safety and infrastructure issues through targeted outreach, education, and engagement to individuals experiencing homelessness and vulnerable communities in low-lying areas during high water events. The Homeless Outreach & Coordination Pilot Project received the 2020 [Outstanding Special District Program award](#) from the SDAO.

### **Northeast Oregon Housing Authority**

While not a special district, NEOHA was reported to be proactive in its engagement of the communities it serves in eastern Oregon. The agency provides a range of housing services to enhance the quality of life for individuals of low to moderate income, working closely with community partners.

Stratton also suggested that we might find interesting cases of engagement at the Tualatin Valley Water District, the Port of Astoria, the Port of Tillamook Bay, and the Bear Creek Valley Sanitary Authority.

## ***A CASE STUDY APPROACH TO BEST PRACTICES***

Taken together, these examples from cities, counties, and special districts point to some of the possible best practice resources that could be developed from more systematic case studies throughout Oregon.

Areas of focus based on just the examples here might include: practices related to boards and commissions, development of equity policies, strategies for engaging diverse communities, effective partnerships with community-based organizations, the use of community visioning processes, engagement for economic revitalization, how to select and work with consultants, how to build support for community engagement among elected officials, models for leadership training programs, integrating digital and in-person techniques, and educating the community about bond measures. It is our observation that the most useful and well-received resources for local governments would be grounded in the real-world experience of their colleagues across jurisdictions.

## CONCLUSION

Our research validated the advice that launched this project. In February 2020, a group of PSU faculty, staff, students, affiliates, and partners considered a proposal to create a training program on community engagement for local governments in Oregon. The participants in the meeting recommended that we investigate current work in the field before developing any future training curriculum. This project was the result, and we learned much about what local governments are already doing, where they get their support, how they learn, and what they need from service providers.

### Main Findings

- **Local governments in all parts of Oregon are doing outstanding work to engage their communities.** Public agencies and the people who work for them have a deep commitment to their communities, take advantage of learning opportunities from a variety of sources, hire talented staff, partner with community organizations and universities, work closely with skilled consultants, and find creative solutions to complex problems. This work deserves to be celebrated and the lessons shared for the benefit of other jurisdictions. This is our main finding that confirms the origin of the project and calls for further research.
- **Community engagement is an emerging field that is rapidly changing.** We emphasize the exploratory nature of this project, and our intention to contribute to an evolving field of practice. Since we began our research in February 2020, the landscape for community engagement has been changed dramatically by a global pandemic, a national dialogue about racial justice, and profound concerns about the future of democracy. These conditions directly affect the level of trust in government, relationships among community members, and the challenges faced by local officials as they seek to engage their communities in decision making.
- **There is a need and desire for more support to local governments.** We heard from everyone we interviewed that community engagement is a vital leadership skill. While most public agencies in Oregon are doing their best to engage their communities, nearly all of them could use additional support. While professional associations and consultants provide an array of resources, there is a gap between the support that is needed and what is available.
- **Local governments have diverse needs.** The goals and challenges of community engagement vary based on an agencies' jurisdictional responsibilities (cities, counties, special districts), size, budget, geography, and demographics. For example: Cities and counties are responsible for land use and a wide range of policies, programs, and services. Their public meetings are often well attended, and they receive public feedback on most decisions. In contrast, special districts provide essential services to many people across multiple jurisdictions, but they often must work hard to let people know what they do, why it matters, and how they are funded. Each local government must decide for itself what works for them and their community
- **Local governments learn from other local governments.** Case studies are likely the best way to share best practices across the approximately 300 local jurisdictions in Oregon (cities, counties, special districts). What are our neighbors doing? What works (and what doesn't)? What tools are most useful? What can we learn from others and how can we avoid pitfalls?

## Building Capacity for Community Engagement

- **Formal training is not the main way that local governments build their capacity.** We learned that government staff and elected officials take many paths to develop the skills they need to engage their communities. Some stories are quite personal, highlighting how lived experience can be a powerful source of an individual's capacity, which in turn benefits the institution that employs them. Peer networks are essential sources of learning, skill development, and personal/ professional relationships. Government associations (of cities, counties, special districts, elected officials) offer regular conferences, webinars, orientations, and mentoring. Professional associations provide standards, guidelines, training, networking, and other support to various categories of government staff. Public universities provide opportunities for undergraduate and graduate students to develop community engagement knowledge and skills. All these sources of support help to build local government capacity apart from formal training.
- **Leadership support and resource investment are the keys to building and sustaining local government capacity for community engagement.** A commitment to community engagement by elected officials and executive staff can move an agency toward the kind of organizational culture described in this report as the highest level of capacity building. This commitment is most likely to endure beyond single projects when staff who are primarily responsible for engagement are elevated within the organizational hierarchy (e.g., reporting directly to the city manager or at least having access to agency leadership).
- **Community engagement is most effective and durable when it is integrated into institutional processes.** Adoption of principles, policies, and programs provides clear signals to elected leaders and staff and encourages consistency across the agency's departments and projects. It fosters an organizational culture supportive of public participation, reflected in job descriptions and staff resources. There is a significant difference between an agency that institutionalizes community engagement as essential to the way it conducts business across the board compared with standalone or project-based efforts that do not necessarily build capacity over time.

## Sources of Support for Local Governments

- **Consultants can contribute to capacity building.** Most public agencies rely on consultants for a variety of community engagement tasks. These professionals bring skills that can complement staff work and using them wisely can contribute to government capacity if they know the community well. If it is specified in their scope of work, they can help build ongoing relationships with the community and contribute to program development (advising leaders, training staff, sharing best practices, connecting staff to the community, etc.). On the other hand, using consultants exclusively for individual projects in place of staff is unlikely to build long term government capacity.
- **Collaboration among jurisdictions has potential benefits but can also be challenging.** Fragmentation or duplication of efforts that target the same community can lead to inefficiencies and constraints on outreach and engagement. At the same time, some agencies may prefer not to collaborate across jurisdictions because they are reluctant to share power.
- **Government capacity is linked to community capacity.** A community that is highly informed and closely connected to one another is better able to participate in government processes, making efforts at engagement more effective. One way to build this community capacity is through various kinds of leadership programs. These can be created by government itself, or government may partner with social organizations to sponsor them. In addition, governments may work directly with

organizations to amplify their ability to reach deeply into the community. A clear best practice to build and sustain partnerships is to sign formal contracts and pay community groups for their assistance. Engagement on specific plans or projects can enhance the effectiveness of future efforts if the government intentionally seeks to strengthen community relationships in the process.

- **There is an opportunity to expand partnerships between rural governments and public universities and colleges.** We learned about effective partnerships between cities in Oregon and both Eastern Oregon University and Portland State University, demonstrating how local governments can leverage support from faculty and students to expand their capacity for community engagement. However, we also heard that rural governments could be more proactive in pursuing grants from federal and state sources, particularly to redevelop brownfields. There is no shortage of potential work and funding that could benefit low-income residents, but rural cities are typically thinly staffed and lack the technical training to pursue these grants. Projects eligible for these funds would also require meaningful public engagement to set community priorities for redevelopment.
- **State and federal governments are potentially valuable sources of support.** As noted in the report, federal and state agencies often set parameters and expectations for community engagement by local governments through rules and regulations. Many provide useful guidance about best practices in the field. At the same time, the capacity to provide direct support or consultation varies greatly across state agencies based on available funding and staff. If the state were to take a more active role in promoting community engagement (e.g., through revisions to Land Use Planning Goal 1 or a statewide policy like the example we found in Scotland), it would be important to offer corresponding support to local governments to help them meet the higher standards.

## The Importance of Inclusion

- **Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) is central to community engagement.** We found this to be true everywhere in Oregon, with the most active efforts in larger metropolitan areas and rural jurisdictions with changing demographics.
- **Local governments benefit from bringing more voices into the public process.** Despite the challenges of community engagement, we heard consistently from those who have been proactive that their efforts generally bring new perspectives to the table, improve relationships between leaders and community members, promote a sense of common purpose, and produce solutions that are more responsive to community needs.
- **Effective community engagement actively recruits community members from diverse backgrounds and experiences to avoid “the illusion of engagement”:** Philip Cooper describes this as “...a condition in which the elected officials and other community leaders consider that there is thorough and active community engagement because there are people engaged in a range of committees, commissions, and the governing body itself. In some communities, however, the same group of people serves year after year, and that includes the members of the governing body. Just as often, those who are actively involved are not representative of the diversity of community residents. Too often, the same people rotate onto and off of city councils, county commissions, or special district boards.”<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Cooper 2022, p. 176.

## Advancement of the Field

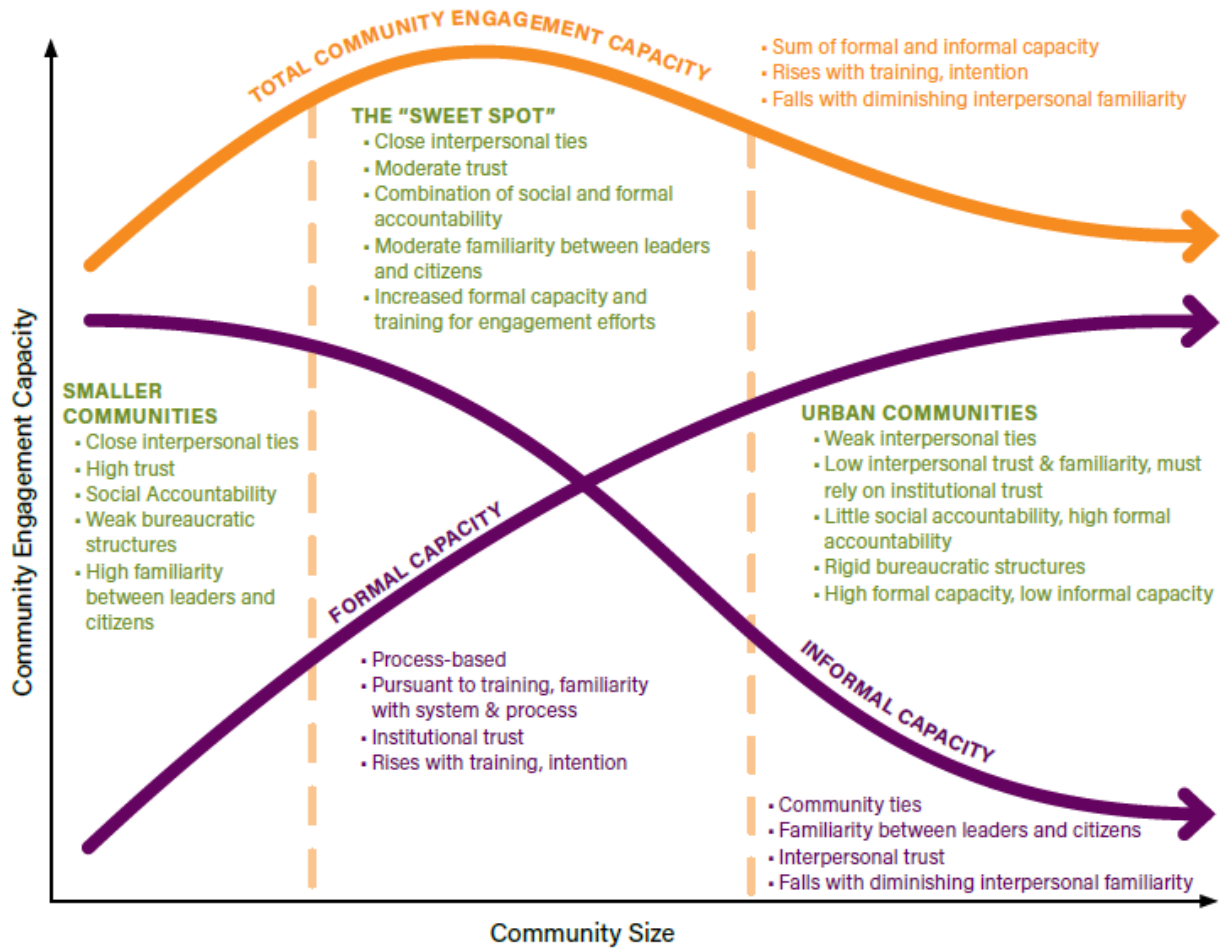
- **The consolidation of a field of study related to community engagement would benefit from further theoretical development:** There are many isolated examples of strong efforts by local governments, and much information available, but there is not a formalized system of knowledge backed by empirical research regarding what good community engagement looks like, factors that encourage it and make it effective, and how to measure and increase capacity. As we noted in the introduction, there can also be a lack of clarity in the definition and use of terms in the field.
- **This report is intended to advance the field:** We see an opportunity to help consolidate the field of study and practice of community engagement by local governments, especially in Oregon. Our interviews revealed that many people feel they are working in isolation, without acknowledgment of the importance of their efforts or their connection to a wider change in how local governments approach their communities. We hope this report makes connections between concepts, inspires more research, sparks collaboration, and celebrates the everyday good work of local governments in Oregon.

## The Sweet Spot

Following is a diagram and description of a possible “Sweet Spot” for community engagement by local governments. It suggests that the opportunities and challenges are different for communities of different sizes, hypothesizing that larger cities and counties have more resources, while smaller cities and towns have a closer personal relationship to their residents. It speaks to a somewhat inverse relationship between formal institutionalization of community engagement and informal relationship building. At a minimum, this is food for thought for academic researchers. For local governments, the hypothesis might help local jurisdictions think about how to structure and support community engagement programs, balancing financial resources with personal relationship building. We emphasize that this is only a hypothesis for comparative study because we know that good community engagement can and does occur in communities of all different sizes. The concept was originally suggested by Gabrielle Brown, a member of our research team.



## THE "SWEET SPOT"



## RECOMMENDATIONS

Throughout the report we have noted potentially fruitful areas for future research and work. There is clearly a desire by many public agencies to improve and institutionalize the way they engage their communities. Changing demographics in Oregon make this more challenging and necessary than ever.

We offer these recommendations to any researchers, service providers, institutions, or other potential partners who care about community engagement. Some recommendations are specific to Oregon institutions, but nearly all should apply beyond the state.

We begin by prioritizing two broad recommendations:

1. **Conduct more extensive empirical research on government capacity building.** There are many referrals, leads, and observations that we could not pursue simply because of time constraints for this report. We believe the most useful resource would be a thorough collection of case studies from jurisdictions throughout the state, using a consistent format that features best practices, success factors, and lessons learned. We heard repeatedly that a fundamental way for local governments to build their capacity is to replicate and adapt the effective approaches of other jurisdictions. Local officials place great value on the actual experiences of their peers and colleagues.

2. **Tailor training and consultation to the specific needs of each jurisdiction.** It is critical to avoid a one-size-fits-all approach. Before offering advice or creating a training session, those who give support should begin by listening to local officials to understand their needs. This assessment step is essential and should also include research into the community's history and demographics. The key concept is coproduction, working together with the client to design the kind of support and resources that would be most helpful in building the government's capacity to engage and benefit the community. This tailored approach contrasts with the imposition of a standardized consulting model or training curriculum to every case.

Following are more specific recommendations, organized in the categories of Resources, Training, Consultation, Convening, and Advocacy.

## Resources

- Develop a library of resources (case studies, best practice guides and toolkits, literature, training opportunities) to aid local governments with capacity building for community engagement. These should be developed in partnership with local government officials and staff and local government and professional associations in Oregon. Possible topics for best practices materials are identified throughout this report.
- Research Comprehensive Plan "Citizen Involvement" programs required by State Planning Goal 1, comparing the range and detail of various approaches throughout the state and how often they are updated.
- Research leadership programs throughout the state to describe different models and how they connect community capacity building to local government engagement.
- Describe what makes partnerships between local governments and community organizations successful to support effective community engagement. Research model contracts and interview contract partners across jurisdictions.
- Research agencies that use digital engagement tools effectively, describe their experiences with them, and offer useful guidance for other jurisdictions.
- Research how local governments collect and analyze data about their communities.
- Research the causes and consequences of efforts to build capacity for engagement. Follow up with contacts and referrals from this project to ask what led them to make the effort, what did and didn't work, what benefits they have seen, and what challenges they have faced.
- Compile a more extensive bibliography of research on this topic.

## Training

- Design a training and consultation program (based on the case studies, best practices guides and toolkits, and literature referenced above) to build local government capacity for community engagement that can be tailored to the needs of specific agencies.
- Describe in greater detail and categorize different types of training on community engagement that are available throughout Oregon.

- Research local and statewide groups that provide training to local governments to strengthen diversity, equity, inclusion, and access. Identify models of collaboration between government and community organizations that local jurisdictions could potentially replicate.
- Explore opportunities with local government associations and professional associations in Oregon to develop community engagement presentations and workshops tailored to their memberships to present at their conferences.

## Consultation

- Develop a suite of consultation services that can be tailored to the needs of specific jurisdictions. Such a package could include elements from all the categories in this section based on a local jurisdiction's needs: research, resources, training, advising, partnerships, convening, services, etc.
- Survey local governments to determine their needs for consultation, sources of current and past support, and gaps in available services.
- Research local and statewide groups that provide consultation to local governments to strengthen diversity, equity, inclusion, and access.
- Identify and support consultants who work with tribal governments and help local governments in Oregon engage communities in tribal jurisdictions.
- Survey Department of Land Conservation and Development (DLCD) field representatives to discover jurisdictions that have more ambitious capacity building programs with respect to Goal 1, to understand the kinds of support they provide to local jurisdictions, and the training and consultation needs for capacity building that they observe in their work.
- Research model RFQ's/contracts for community engagement consultants, interview key informants, and offer guidance to local jurisdictions about how to assess their need for outside help, how to find a consultant that is a good fit for their needs, what questions to ask potential candidates, and how to use consultation to build long-term capacity. Provide a contract template.

## Convening

- Develop a contact list of local government staff throughout Oregon who are primarily responsible for community engagement, university educators and program staff who work directly with local governments on community engagement, and other practitioners and trainers whose work focuses on building capacity for community engagement by local governments. Use the list to convene a community of practice for professional support.
- Consider a forum to connect and convene people involved in the design and operation of community leadership programs throughout the state (beginning with those that are sponsored by or directly related to local governments).
- Reach out to national organizations that provide community engagement support to local governments to raise the profile of work in Oregon.

## Advocacy

- Explore the implications of any potential new legislation to revise Statewide Planning Goal 1 and advocate at the state level for changes based on best practices, exemplary local government Comprehensive Plan "Citizen Involvement" chapters, and empirical research.

- Collaborate with Oregon professional associations to identify ways to advocate for local government capacity building.
- Explore opportunities to help develop and advocate for state legislation that would advance community engagement by local governments in Oregon, such as a statewide policy (like Scotland's), guidelines for regulatory development processes (like Australia's), and significant improvements in formal notification requirements for local governments (along with model code language).

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## **APPENDIX 1**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW & THEORY OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

#### **Establishing a Framework for Understanding Community Engagement**

##### **DEFINITIONS**

To understand how local governments can increase their capacity for community engagement, we sought a coherent framework to describe what community engagement is and how it is carried out in practice. This allowed us to define the field of practice with more precision, and to establish a deductive framework by which to analyze case studies, training regimes, and other engagement-based systems.

We began by seeking and identifying a definition of community engagement for the purposes of our project. The term has been used widely to describe efforts ranging from public relations where the intent is to inform and sometimes persuade the public about the actions and intentions of an organization, to a fully integrated participatory approach in governmental decision making. We are most interested in the latter. This particular form of community engagement or public participation can be defined as **“...the activities by which people’s concerns, needs, interests, and values are incorporated into decisions and actions on public matters and issues.”**<sup>34</sup>

A more expansive definition of community engagement is provided by the Scotland National Standards for Community Engagement:

Community engagement is a purposeful process which develops a working relationship between communities, community organizations and public and private bodies to help them to identify and act on community needs and ambitions. It involves respectful dialogue between everyone involved, aimed at improving understanding between them and taking joint action to achieve positive change.<sup>35</sup>

According to these standards, successful community engagement depends on the key principles of fairness and equality, and a commitment to learning and continuous improvement. They state that high quality community engagement is:

- **effective** – in meeting the needs and expectations of the people involved;
- **efficient** – by being well informed and properly planned; and
- **fair** – by giving people who may face additional barriers to getting involved an equal opportunity to participate.<sup>36</sup>

At its most robust, community engagement is the coproduction of public policy and action, or collaborative governance, based on the belief that “those who are affected by a decision have a right to

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<sup>34</sup> Nabatchi, Tina, and Leighninger, Matthew. Public Participation for 21st Century Democracy. Bryson Series in Public and Nonprofit Management. Hoboken, New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons, 2015, 6

<sup>35</sup> Scotland National Standards for Community Engagement, <https://blogs.gov.scot/participation/2022/06/29/1313/#:~:text=The%20NSfCE%20are%20good%2Dpractice,plan%20and%20evaluate%20engagement%20practice>

<sup>36</sup> N & L 2015, 6

be involved in the decision-making process.”<sup>37</sup> This sentiment is at the core of almost all public participation or community engagement efforts.

### **FRAMING COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT EFFORTS**

If we accept that public decision making should, at a minimum, reflect the interests of the public, and more ideally, be significantly informed, or indeed coproduced, by the affected individuals and communities, then the central question becomes how to structure such efforts.

There are many frameworks for classifying or categorizing community engagement. One of the earliest that significantly informs modern practice is Arnstein’s Ladder of Citizen Participation.<sup>38</sup> This model describes three broad categories of participation: Non-participation, Tokenism, and Empowerment, within which are more incremental degrees, described in the online Citizen’s Handbook:

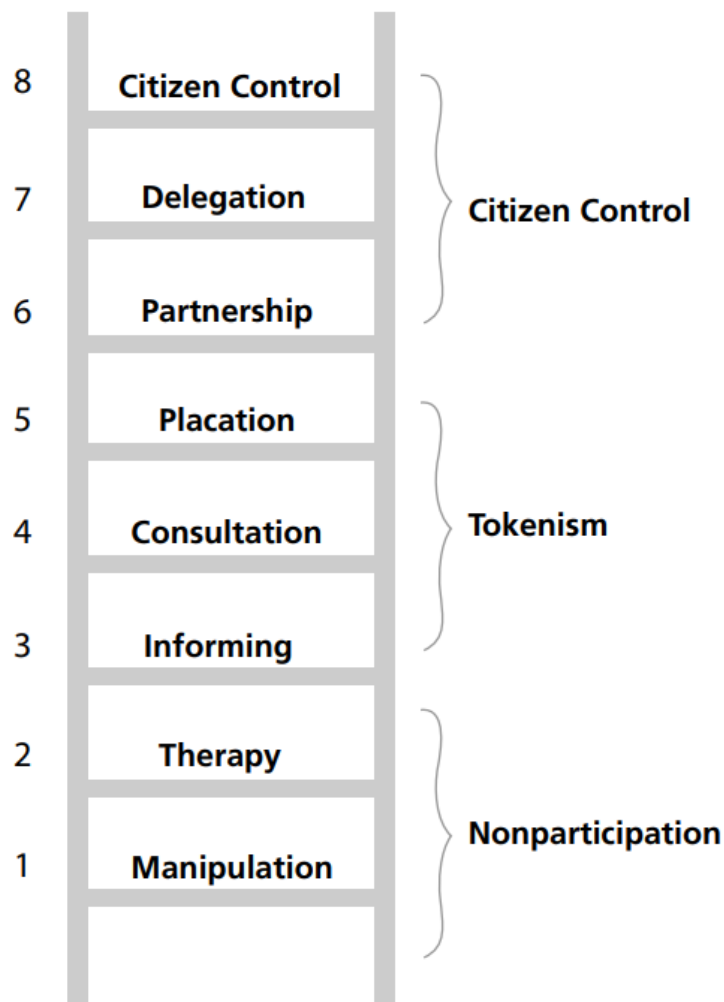
- **1 Manipulation and 2 Therapy.** Both are non participative. The aim is to cure or educate the participants. The proposed plan is best and the job of participation is to achieve public support through public relations.
- **3 Informing.** A most important first step to legitimate participation. But too frequently the emphasis is on a one way flow of information. No channel for feedback.
- **4 Consultation.** Again a legitimate step that might include attitude surveys, neighbourhood meetings and public enquiries. But Arnstein still feels this is just a window dressing ritual.
- **5 Placation.** For example, co-option of hand-picked ‘worthies’ onto committees. It allows citizens to advise or plan ad infinitum but retains for power holders the right to judge the legitimacy or feasibility of the advice.
- **6 Partnership.** Power is in fact redistributed through negotiation between citizens and power holders. Planning and decision-making responsibilities are shared e.g. through joint committees.
- **7 Delegation.** Citizens holding a clear majority of seats on committees with delegated powers to make decisions. Public now has the power to assure accountability of the programme to them.
- **8 Citizen Control.** Have-nots handle the entire job of planning, policy making and managing a programme e.g. neighbourhood corporation with no intermediaries between it and the source of funds.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> IAP2 Core Values, <https://www.iap2.org/page/corevalues>

<sup>38</sup> Sherry R. Arnstein (1969) A Ladder Of Citizen Participation, Journal of the American Institute of Planners, 35:4, 216-224, DOI: [10.1080/01944366908977225](https://doi.org/10.1080/01944366908977225)

<sup>39</sup> Citizen’s Handbook, <https://citizenshandbook.org/arnsteinsladder.html>



A more contemporary description of the spectrum of public participation comes from the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2), which similarly sites participatory processes on a spectrum from Informing to Empowerment.<sup>40</sup> This framework is less normative than Arnstein's, emphasizing the need to situate efforts at an appropriate point within the spectrum without necessarily assuming that one end is inherently better than the other in all contexts. However, both spectra are useful descriptive tools by which participatory processes can be evaluated for the level of participation available to the public.

<sup>40</sup> IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation, [https://cdn.ymaws.com/www.iap2.org/resource/resmgr/pillars/Spectrum\\_8.5x11\\_Print.pdf](https://cdn.ymaws.com/www.iap2.org/resource/resmgr/pillars/Spectrum_8.5x11_Print.pdf)

# IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation

IAP2's Spectrum of Public Participation was designed to assist with the selection of the level of participation that defines the public's role in any public participation process. The Spectrum is used internationally, and it is found in public participation plans around the world.

| INCREASING IMPACT ON THE DECISION |  |  |   |   |  |
|-----------------------------------|--|--|---|---|--|
|                                   | INFORM   | CONSULT  | INVOLVE   | COLLABORATE   | EMPOWER  |
| PUBLIC PARTICIPATION GOAL         | To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions. | To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions.  | To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.  | To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.                     | To place final decision making in the hands of the public. |
| PROMISE TO THE PUBLIC             | We will keep you informed.   | We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and aspirations, and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision. | We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision. | We will look to you for advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible. | We will implement what you decide.                         |

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Looking to a more formalized and statutory framework, Scotland's National Standards for Community Engagement, which establish a foundational set of imperatives for community engagement: **shared decision-making**, where communities influence options and the final policies that are implemented; **shared action**, where communities contribute to any action taken as a result of the engagement process; and **support for community-led action**, where communities are best placed to deal with the issues they experience and are supported to take the lead in providing a response. This framework is then supported by a set of standards or core principles that guide public processes.<sup>41</sup>

## Applying Frameworks to Community Engagement Activities

Nabatchi & Leighninger further refine this basic process-evaluation framework by applying it to specific community engagement tools. Through this effort, they develop a typology spectrum that describes processes from Thin to Thick, both differentiated from conventional participation forms that are more like the informing and consultation segments from Arnstein and IAP2.

Thin processes include petitions, surveys, social media campaigns, or individual outreach. Thicker efforts include more meaningful and powerful public participation efforts, which while more intensive and time consuming, are also more indicative of a robust effort at citizen empowerment. A list of tactics from thin to thick:

- Social media

<sup>41</sup> Scotland National Standards for Community Engagement, <https://www.scdc.org.uk/what/national-standards>

- Surveys, polls
- Focus groups
- Online reporting platforms
- Crowdsourcing
- Serious games
- Wiki mapping/writing platforms
- Online networks
- Collaborative planning processes
- Participatory budgeting
- Public deliberation<sup>42</sup>

They argue that, compared to genuine participatory efforts, conventional community engagement is intended to uphold order, focusing on accountability and transparency (citizen checks on governmental power) without providing actual participation in decision-making processes.

They note that this form of engagement results in reduced participation because if “‘getting involved.’.. does not provide them with what they want—**problem-solving, civility, or community**—why should they participate?”<sup>43</sup> Further, they note some of the principal challenges embedded in conventional systems that prevent more participatory governance. The first is governmental:

Most governments have employees tasked with informing and interacting with citizens, either in a particular issue area or by liaising with citizen groups and associations. These staff positions are often occupied by the youngest and most inexperienced employees. Many governments also have commissions and task forces, in areas such as human relations or planning and zoning, which are charged with engaging the public as part of their work. The volunteers serving in these capacities often see their roles as representative, not participatory: they are there to bring the interests and concerns of others to the table, not engage those people directly. Both the employees and the volunteers tend to have only a vague sense of the skills and capacities necessary for productively engaging the public (Lukensmeyer, Goldman, & Stern, 2011).<sup>44</sup>

Second, “In many cities, the participation ‘skill base’ is not deep enough to meet this challenge. In other places, the skills are there but so diffused throughout the community that it is not easy to find the people who could be helpful. Within city hall, these capacities are sometimes limited to a small cadre of public employees working out of departments for neighborhood services or human relations.”<sup>45</sup>

However, simply using participatory tools and tactics does not guarantee actual participation. Nabatchi and Leighninger list a few keys traits of ‘good’ participation, which are comparable to Scotland’s Community Engagement Standards:

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<sup>42</sup> N & L 2015, 262.

<sup>43</sup> N & L 2015, 243.

<sup>44</sup> N & L 2015, 7, citing Lukensmeyer, Carolyn J., Joseph P. Goldman, & David Stern. (2011). *Assessing public participation in an open government era: A review of federal agency plans*. Washington, DC: IBM Center for the Business of Government.

<sup>45</sup> N & L 2015, 291.

- Adult-adult relationships
- Provide factual information
- Sound group process techniques
- Let people tell their stories
- Provides real choices (not selling pre-determined choices)
- Gives participants a sense of political legitimacy
- Provides participants w/ options for taking action
- Makes participation enjoyable
- Easy & convenient to participate in<sup>46</sup>

These vital attributes of community engagement processes can be distilled into a few basic typologies. First, **who** is at the table? Second, **how** do they interact? And third, **what** are they empowered to do? From these essential questions, we can parse out some general elements that affect how ‘thick’ the process is:

- **Who** is at the table? (People)
  - o Organizing
  - o Recruitment
  - o Inclusion
- **How** do they interact? (Process)
  - o Mediation
  - o Communication
  - o Addressing emotion/conflict
- **What** are they empowered to do? (Product)
  - o Issue exploration
  - o Empowerment
  - o Decision making

## Describing Community Engagement Capacity-Building Providers

There are currently a multitude of organizations, agencies, and groups that provide services and resources falling under the umbrella of ‘community engagement’ at all levels of governance. In order to better describe the types of services and resources, we began by compiling a broad list of organizations working in community engagement. The only limits were that the groups would be outside formal academic programs and working in the United States (though both of these were later relaxed as important organizations and efforts were discovered, many of which were based in academic settings). In the end, any organization or institute that claimed to be furthering the aims of community engagement outside of explicitly degree—or academic certificate-seeking coursework was included. This list was composed of resources provided by the research leads as well as internet searches. It was

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<sup>46</sup> N & L 2015, 25.

augmented throughout the process as new organizations were cited in interviews or referred by groups already identified.

As groups were added, their contribution to community engagement was cataloged and organized, resulting in a general typology derived from common attributes. We started with three categories to classify organizations: those that provide information and resources, those that professionally consult or facilitate community engagement efforts, and those that provide community engagement training for professionals. As we compiled a list of “service providers,” it became clear that there was significant overlap across categories, as well as a number of sub-categories within the broad groupings.

The first group, those that provide information and resources, range from organizations that produce original research and conduct surveys (e.g., Public Agenda), either on community engagement efforts generally or on specific policy or local problems and efforts, to general clearinghouses for information and resources produced by other groups and individuals (e.g., National Coalition for Dialogue and Deliberation). Within this group are also organizations that facilitate peer-to-peer information exchange, either through public forums, symposia, and conferences, or by facilitating direct peer-to-peer conversations among professionals. Notably, while many of the groups that fall under this category do not provide either training or consultation/facilitation, most of the groups that do offer those services also provide some level of information as a foundation for their work.

The second group of organizations is those that provide consultation or facilitation services on specific policy or community issues. These organizations typically act as mediators or neutral arbiters for collaborative governance efforts in communities, either formally (e.g., Oregon Consensus and Oregon Solutions) or through social media platforms (e.g., Kitchen Table Democracy and Public Agenda) that connect individuals across broad political spectra. The organizations in this group differ from the other two in that they generally do not provide a service that directly enhances the capacity of policymakers and public officials to conduct community engagement, but rather fill capacity gaps by bringing disparate actors together to do community engagement work toward a specific outcome.

The final group, and the one of most interest to this project, are those organizations that provide various training programs that enhance the capacity of policymakers and public officials to conduct community engagement efforts. In general, these organizations provide some kind of curriculum of courses, seminars, and programs to policymakers with the intent of developing skill sets and offering tools that allow those professionals to undertake community engagement efforts more effectively and successfully. Within this group, there are two general categories of service: training provided by private individuals and companies (e.g., Bleiker Training) and training by institutes located within academic institutions (e.g., Davenport Institute and Institute for Policy and Civic Engagement). It is an open question whether this distinction is helpful in understanding the demand for training by local governments or any substantive outcomes.

After the general categorization above, we shifted our focus to the final category, those organizations that provide direct training in community engagement. The rationale for this was twofold. First, the intent of our research is to provide a base of knowledge for possible future training or consultation offered through the Center for Public Service at PSU. Programs in this category are therefore likely to be the most relevant and the most important to understand more deeply. Second, this smaller group has outcomes that are not related to specific policy domains, but to community engagement as a discipline. This focus allows us to hone in on the most critical and requisite skill sets and tools that apply broadly to community engagement efforts without being limited or tailored to specific policy domains. By



investigating and cataloging these groups, it should be easier to make general observations about community engagement practices and tools as well as making it easier to compare providers and to identify overlap and, more critically, gaps in the skill sets and tools necessary for effective community engagement.

Information available online about specific training programs is relatively sparse and non-specific, relying more on intent and general rhetoric about the importance of community engagement rather than focusing on the specific skills or tools that an organization's training programs provide. However, based on internet research and the experience of our project team regarding the content of specific programs, we were able to identify meaningful skill sets and tools that organizations and consultants provide, including:

- Collaborative Governance/Action
- Leadership Development
- Conflict Resolution
- Issue Exploration
- Decision-Making
- Dealing w/ Conflict/Emotion
- Facilitation/Mediation
- Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion
- Community Organizing
- Participatory Planning/Budgeting
- Communication and Outreach
- Engagement Strategy and Design
- Methods and Tools
- Digital Engagement

To this list, we can add the “ten key talents for engaging citizens” from the Participation Skills Module provided by Nabatchi & Leighinger:

1. Building coalitions and networks;
2. Recruiting participants;
3. Communicating about participation;
4. Managing conflict;
5. Providing information and options;
6. Managing discussions;
7. Helping participants generate ideas;
8. Helping participants make group decisions;
9. Supporting action efforts; and
10. Evaluating participation.<sup>47</sup>

The theoretical constructs and skill set lists provide us with a framework we can use to evaluate other training and participation regimes or develop our own. To test this approach, we first need an overview of participatory efforts and training regimes. Restricting our attention to those in Oregon, we focused on two formal organizations: Oregon Consensus and Oregon Solutions, both of which provide third-party services in the state that aid or conduct community engagement/public participation efforts.

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<sup>47</sup> Wiley Online, <https://www.wiley.com/en-us/Public+Participation+for+21st+Century+Democracy-p-9781118688403>

Oregon Consensus was established by the Oregon legislature in 1989 to professionalize community dispute mediation, and today acts as a forum that conducts multi-party dispute resolution on public policy questions throughout the state. Oregon Solutions, established by the legislature in 2001, is designated by the governor to aggregate resources and identify stakeholders and subject matter experts to aid public participation and collaborative governance efforts. While they act in different segments of community engagement programs, it is useful to review their efforts in light of both the framework spectra and skill sets discussed above.

It must be noted that the list of skill sets above is not exhaustive and is not grounded in a systematic structure or epistemology. We compiled the list inductively, and a more rigorous approach would connect the specific skills to a more robust deductive scaffold. Some are indeed specialized skills (such as inclusion, or bringing underrepresented voices into collaborative processes, or dealing with conflict and emotion in a public discourse setting); some are models of collaborative processes (such as participatory planning/budgeting); and some are process-oriented (such as decision-making or mediation).

At the same time, our list does yield meaningful information. First, it reveals priorities for various training programs, whether based on specific skill sets or aspirational ideals. Perhaps most importantly, it is a step towards refinement of a working definition for ‘community engagement,’ which initial research shows is fairly broad in application and used differently in different contexts. This is an important point. Without a specific definition that drives a sound theoretical framework, it is hard to imagine developing a program of professional training that is more than a toolbox to be deployed for better or worse by practitioners depending on their preferences and qualities. While this is often what local government staff are looking for (immediate help with specific plans or projects), a responsible approach to training and consultation would situate these practical tools and techniques within a larger programmatic context.

## **The Crucial Link Between Government and Community Capacity**

In addition to the national organizations we cover in this report, there are countless local organizations that specialize in developing leadership skills within their communities and empowering their members to engage in government decision making processes. A future analysis of these groups throughout Oregon would further add to our understanding of how these programs potentially enhance engagement capacity and how they are different or similar to the training programs designed for government professionals. Such an analysis could also provide an opportunity to evaluate whether the frameworks and skill sets derived from the perspective of policy makers and government staff are applicable, in alignment, or divergent with those received within the community (which are generally less formally structured, less constrained by bureaucratic rigidity, and potentially more adaptable to changes in government leadership). We emphasize that building local government capacity for engagement is inextricably linked to building participation capacity within the community.

## **APPENDIX 2**

### **ACADEMIC PROGRAMS AND COURSEWORK RELATED TO COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

Many public universities offer coursework related to community engagement. This source of education can affect local government capacity for community engagement in at least three ways: (1) working professionals can take courses that enhance their skills and knowledge, (2) students who receive degrees in public administration or public policy may go on to work for local government, and (3) universities collaborate with local governments on publicly funded projects through student internships, fieldwork and degree programs. Among Oregon’s seven public universities, three offer a public administration degree, four offer a public policy degree, and one offers a combination of public administration and policy.

**Table 1: Public Universities’ Public Administration and Policy Degrees**

| <b>Name</b>                    | <b>Public Administration Degree</b> | <b>Public Policy Degree</b> |
|--------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Portland State University      | Y                                   | Y                           |
| University of Oregon           | Y                                   | Y                           |
| Oregon State University        | N                                   | Y                           |
| Western Oregon University      | Y - Combined                        |                             |
| Eastern Oregon University      | Y                                   | Y                           |
| Southern Oregon University     | N                                   | N                           |
| Oregon Institute of Technology | N                                   | N                           |

Two universities offer civic engagement-related concentrations. Oregon State University offers a [Community History and Civic Engagement Graduate Option](#) as a part of their Master’s of Arts or Master’s of Science in History degree, and Southern Oregon University offers a [Civic Engagement Concentration](#) as a part of their Bachelor’s of Arts in Political Science degree. Interestingly, neither of these degree options includes coursework specifically related to civic or community engagement, though much of the coursework is related to the skill sets upon which community engagement professionals often rely.

Programs with a concentration in community engagement are rare in the United States, with notable exceptions such as [Notre Dame University](#), [Duke University](#), [Michigan State University](#), [University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee](#), and [Northwestern University](#), all of which have undergraduate or graduate certificates in community or civic engagement. Two programs that we focused on for this project were Pepperdine University’s [Professional Certificate in Advanced Public Engagement for Local Government](#), hosted by the Davenport Institute at Pepperdine University in California, and Simon Fraser University’s [Dialogue and Civic Engagement Certificate](#).

### *The Carnegie Foundation's Elective Classification for Community Engagement*

Evaluation of community engagement is critical to sustaining institutional investments. What are the benefits of these programs and why should we continue to support them? Compared with local government, the education sector has been particularly proactive in both engaging their communities (students, faculty, local communities, donors, etc.) and in measuring the outcome of these efforts.

As a nationwide example, colleges and universities that demonstrate a commitment to community engagement can receive the Carnegie Foundation's Elective Classification for Community Engagement. Administered by Albion College in Albion, MI, this classification "is an evidence-based documentation of institutional practice to be used in a process of self assessment and quality improvement. In this way, it is similar to an accreditation process of self-study. The documentation is reviewed by a National Review Panel to determine whether the institution qualifies for recognition as a community-engaged institution."<sup>48</sup> Portland State University received this classification most recently in 2015, and Oregon State University received the classification in 2020. This sort of certification could be adapted to acknowledge good community engagement by local governments.

The Professional Certificate program at Pepperdine University's Davenport Institute for Public Engagement and Civic Leadership is a five-week commitment of two-and-a-half-hour weekly sessions. According to their website, "Through this program, mid-career professionals are prepared to lead a publicly-engaged organization by gaining a deep understanding of the context, purpose, and best practices for engaging residents in the decisions that affect their lives and communities."<sup>49</sup> While there are no specific courses involved (rather, a condensed program with interactive exercises), the experience is an opportunity for professionals to immediately apply their learning to their work.

The Dialogue and Civic Engagement Certificate at Simon Fraser University includes a series of workshop-style, one-to-three-day courses over at least eight months and no more than three years. According to their website:

SFU's Dialogue and Civic Engagement Certificate will help you build the skills you need to design and implement engagement strategies where people feel valued, connected to the process, and more committed to the outcomes. By integrating proven dialogic principles and engagement techniques, you can enable your stakeholders, whether internal or external to your organization or community, to influence outcomes on key issues.<sup>50</sup>

While no university or college in Oregon offers similar applied programs for community engagement, each public university offers courses that relate to the work of community engagement professionals. We identified 61 community engagement-related courses across the state based on two criteria:

1. Is the course explicitly named or described as related to the practice or theory of community engagement?

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<sup>48</sup> <https://carnegieelectiveclassifications.org/>

<sup>49</sup> <https://publicpolicy.pepperdine.edu/davenport-institute/certificate-public-engagement/>

<sup>50</sup> <https://www.sfu.ca/continuing-studies/programs/dialogue-and-civic-engagement-certificate/why-this-program.html>

2. Would taking the course help community engagement professionals in any department of an organization learn or develop the necessary skillsets to engage their community?

**Table 2: Community Engagement Related Courses—Oregon**

| <b>Name</b>                          | <b>Total CE-Related Courses</b> |
|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Portland State University (PSU)      | 36                              |
| University of Oregon (UO)            | 3                               |
| Oregon State University (OSU)        | 6                               |
| Western Oregon University (WOU)      | 4                               |
| Eastern Oregon University (EOU)      | 2                               |
| Southern Oregon University (SOU)     | 6                               |
| Oregon Institute of Technology (OIT) | 4                               |
| <b>Total</b>                         | <b>61</b>                       |

**Community Engagement Related Courses - WA and BC**

| <b>Name</b>                    | <b>Total CE-Related Courses</b> |
|--------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| University of Washington       | 11                              |
| Washington State University    | 6                               |
| Simon Fraser University        | 12                              |
| University of British Columbia | 2                               |
| University of Victoria         | 16                              |
| <b>Total</b>                   | <b>47</b>                       |

**Table 3: Community Engagement Skill Sets by Oregon University**

| <b>Name</b>   | <b>Collaborative Governance/<br/>Action</b> | <b>Leadership</b>     | <b>Conflict Resolution</b> | <b>Issue Exploration</b> | <b>Decision-Making</b> | <b>Dealing w/<br/>Conflict/<br/>Emotion</b> |
|---------------|---|-----------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------|---|
| PSU           | 69.44%<br>(25)                              | 11.11%<br>(4)         | 41.67%<br>(15)             | 33.33%<br>(12)           | 33.33%<br>(12)         | 52.78%<br>(19)                              |
| UO            | 66.67%<br>(2)                               | 0.00%<br>(0)          | 0.00%<br>(0)               | 66.67%<br>(2)            | 0.00%<br>(0)           | 0.00%<br>(0)                                |
| OSU           | 33.33%<br>(2)                               | 16.67%<br>(1)         | 33.33%<br>(2)              | 50.00%<br>(3)            | 33.33%<br>(2)          | 50.00%<br>(3)                               |
| WOU           | 50.00%<br>(2)                               | 0.00%<br>(0)          | 0.00%<br>(0)               | 75.00%<br>(3)            | 0.00%<br>(0)           | 50.00%<br>(2)                               |
| EOU           | 100.00%<br>(2)                              | 50.00%<br>(1)         | 0.00%<br>(0)               | 50.00%<br>(1)            | 50.00%<br>(1)          | 0.00%<br>(0)                                |
| SOU           | 16.67%<br>(1)                               | 16.67%<br>(1)         | 100.00%<br>(6)             | 0.00%<br>(0)             | 33.33%<br>(2)          | 100.00%<br>(6)                              |
| OIT           | 25.00%<br>(1)                               | 25.00%<br>(1)         | 100.00%<br>(4)             | 0.00%<br>(0)             | 25.00%<br>(1)          | 100.00%<br>(4)                              |
| <b>Totals</b> | <b>57.38%<br/>(35)</b>                      | <b>13.11%<br/>(8)</b> | <b>44.26%<br/>(27)</b>     | <b>34.43%<br/>(21)</b>   | <b>29.51%<br/>(18)</b> | <b>55.74%<br/>(34)</b>                      |

**Community Engagement Skill Sets by Oregon University (cont.)**

| Name          | Facilitation/<br>Mediation   | Inclusion                    | Organizing                   | Participatory<br>Planning    | Comm.                        | Engagement<br>Methods/<br>Procedures/<br>Tools |
|---------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|--|
| PSU           | 47.22%<br>(17)               | 27.78%<br>(10)               | 38.89%<br>(14)               | 58.33%<br>(21)               | 80.56%<br>(29)               | 72.22%<br>(26)                                 |
| UO            | 33.33%<br>(1)                | 33.33%<br>(1)                | 33.33%<br>(1)                | 66.67%<br>(2)                | 0.00%<br>(0)                 | 66.67%<br>(2)                                  |
| OSU           | 33.33%<br>(2)                | 33.33%<br>(2)                | 33.33%<br>(2)                | 66.67%<br>(4)                | 66.67%<br>(4)                | 66.67%<br>(4)                                  |
| WOU           | 50.00%<br>(2)                | 0.00%<br>(0)                 | 50.00%<br>(2)                | 50.00%<br>(2)                | 50.00%<br>(2)                | 100.00%<br>(4)                                 |
| EOU           | 0.00%<br>(0)                 | 0.00%<br>(0)                 | 50.00%<br>(1)                | 50.00%<br>(1)                | 50.00%<br>(1)                | 0.00%<br>(0)                                   |
| SOU           | 83.33%<br>(5)                | 0.00%<br>(0)                 | 0.00%<br>(0)                 | 0.00%<br>(0)                 | 100.00%<br>(6)               | 16.67%<br>(1)                                  |
| OIT           | 100.00%<br>(4)               | 50.00%<br>(2)                | 0.00%<br>(0)                 | 25.00%<br>(1)                | 100.00%<br>(4)               | 75.00%<br>(3)                                  |
| <b>Totals</b> | <b>50.82%</b><br><b>(31)</b> | <b>24.59%</b><br><b>(15)</b> | <b>32.79%</b><br><b>(20)</b> | <b>50.82%</b><br><b>(31)</b> | <b>75.41%</b><br><b>(46)</b> | <b>65.57%</b><br><b>(40)</b>                   |

**Table 4: Community Engagement Skill Sets Totals**

| <b>Skill Set</b>                    | <b>Totals</b> |
|-------------------------------------|---------------|
| Leadership                          | 13.11% (8)    |
| Inclusion                           | 24.59% (15)   |
| Decision-Making                     | 29.51% (18)   |
| Organizing                          | 32.79% (20)   |
| Issue Exploration                   | 34.43% (21)   |
| Conflict Resolution                 | 44.26% (27)   |
| Facilitation/Mediation              | 50.82% (31)   |
| Participatory Planning              | 50.82% (31)   |
| Dealing w/ Conflict/Emotion         | 55.74% (34)   |
| Collaborative Governance/Action     | 57.38% (35)   |
| Engagement Methods/Procedures/Tools | 65.57% (40)   |
| Communication                       | 75.41% (46)   |

Descriptions of the courses taught in Oregon universities were catalogued based on the community engagement skillsets identified in Appendix 1: Collaborative Governance/Action; Leadership; Conflict Resolution; Issue Exploration; Decision-Making; Dealing w/ Conflict/Emotion; Facilitation/Mediation; Inclusion; Organizing; Participatory Planning/Budgeting; Communication Engagement Methods/Procedures/Tools.

Leadership and Inclusion are the least-developed skill sets in any of the Oregon universities. Communication and Engagement Methods/Procedures/Tools are comparatively common, while the remaining skillsets are generally covered between about 30% and 58% of the time.

### **Excluded Courses**

Many courses might relate to any of the identified skillsets in ways that could help train or educate government professionals. These include most courses in the Communication discipline or courses such as “Community Studies”. However, they were not included in the analysis because they did not appear to meet one or both of the two criteria described above. Similarly, there are many courses in specific disciplines such as Urban Planning, Education, or Criminal Justice that discuss some elements of community engagement within that industry or sector. Unless a course met at least one of the two criteria, these courses were not analyzed.

This research also did not compare any private, for-profit, or community college offerings in Oregon, which may yield additional resources and warrant further research.

### **Community Colleges**

There are seventeen community colleges in Oregon, several of which are the only institutions of higher education in their communities. Each provides relatively affordable and accessible education and training for students and members of the local workforce, and some may offer courses similar to those identified in the analysis of the four-year universities. Especially for local governments in rural areas, community colleges may be useful resources for accessing community engagement-related education and training. They may also present opportunities for unique and dynamic partnerships for engaging the local community or developing joint solutions to local problems.

We recommend further research to identify coursework at community colleges related to community engagement, and a more thorough analysis of how these programs support capacity building for local governments in Oregon.

## **Conclusions**

This analysis demonstrates the academic richness of community engagement and the robust variety of options available in Oregon. It also presents some opportunities for improvement, such as skill-building community engagement coursework in Leadership and Inclusion; more academic opportunities to build community engagement skills outside of the Portland metro area; and creation of professional degrees or certifications specifically for community engagement.

Portland State University is particularly well-positioned among the four-year universities to provide academic opportunities for building community engagement skills. The wide variety of courses at PSU described in the report suggests that there may be untapped potential to formalize a community engagement professional certificate program. The skill sets identified here may also provide a starting point for building program or course outcomes for any university or college that is interested in offering coursework related to community engagement.

Finally, there may be opportunities to enhance community engagement skillsets beyond what is currently offered at any public university in Oregon. As evidenced by the coursework in OSU’s

Community History and Civic Engagement Graduate Option as a part of their Master's of Arts or Master's of Science in History degree and SOU's Civic Engagement Concentration as a part of their Bachelor's of Arts in Political Science degree, studying community engagement need not be bound to explicitly skill-building coursework. Indeed, the challenges presented by the global pandemic and the current attention to equity in government present new challenges and opportunities to universities to be relevant and innovative in their course offerings.

Naturally, local government professionals join Oregon's public service workforce with a variety of educational, experiential, and geographic backgrounds. Many may not have been on an educational path that included coursework or programs such as the ones described here. A central goal of this analysis is to contribute to the understanding of the many opportunities that students and local government professionals have to build their community engagement skills in Oregon, and the possibilities for learning in the future.



## **APPENDIX 3**

### **CONSULTANTS & ONLINE SERVICE PROVIDERS**

#### **Community Engagement Consultants**

As noted in the report, we did not seek to create an exhaustive list of community engagement consultants. Those listed here are offered as a small sample of the numerous private companies that provide services to local governments in Oregon. They are included not because we endorse them, but because they were mentioned to us by people we interviewed. In some cases, we spoke with principals from these firms, but for most the descriptions are based on information from their websites.

#### **JEANNE LAWSON AND ASSOCIATES**

JLA has been working with local governments to engage communities in Oregon since 1988. JLA's website asserts that "public involvement is a dynamic, ever-changing discipline" and requires tailored strategies that evolve and adapt to new needs. JLA's stated goal is to reach out to and engage "people who are impacted, interested and influential, as well as those who have been traditionally under-represented in public decision making." JLA believes that good public process "means building relationships and having genuine conversations—listening and responding," resulting in "better decisions and projects." JLA tailors the services it provides and tools it uses to each unique project and community based on learning during a project and stresses the importance of being prepared to adjust a process to "better address changing circumstances."

JLA's services include:

- **Customized Engagement Strategies and Decision-Making Processes.**
- **Stakeholder Input and Reports:** Stakeholder interviews, small group discussions in multiple languages, online surveys, or informal intercept surveys, etc.
- **Facilitation:** Meeting design, implementation, and documentation by neutral facilitators, for "advisory committees, blue ribbon panels and policy groups, sounding boards, and other groups" to "allow various viewpoints to engage in dialogue, discuss trade-offs, and seek common ground on complex policy issues."
- **Strategic Communications:** Development of comprehensive communications plans, "key messages, talking points, templates, visual resources and implementation strategies."
- **Online Engagement:** "[C]ustom online open houses, social media campaigns, online surveys, e-newsletters, websites, interactive storytelling, map-based feedback tools."
- **Digital Storytelling:** JLA supports the use of video as a public involvement tool through their in-house services, including "strategy, scripting, filming, interviews, animation, post-production, captioning, and translation.
- **Public Meetings and Events:** Planning and support for "public open houses, workshops, ribbon cuttings, groundbreakings, living room meet-ups, community celebrations" that bring together "a few neighbors to hundreds of people."
- **In-Person Engagement:** Getting out and "talking to community members where they are" through "new and alternative formats to conduct neighbor and business canvassing, tabling events, area tours, community presentations, and many types of individual engagement."

- **Design and Copywriting:** Engaging stakeholders “through clear, compelling print and digital communications” including “copywriting, graphic design, print production, illustration infographics, map creation” and other elements needed to explain a project to a diverse community.

## **ENVIROISSUES**

EnviroIssues states that it specializes in “complex projects that require community involvement” and tackling “some of the thorniest public policy and environmental issues of our day.” The firm develops and implements “comprehensive public involvement, strategic communications, and outreach plans and programs” that seek to ensure that “members of a community understood and could comment on the developments that affected their commutes, their water and power systems, and beyond.” EnviroIssues describes its staff as experts in “community outreach, public involvement planning, communications strategy, web design and development and graphic design” as well as the “science, engineering and technical aspects that underlie many issues...” They state that their work in “communications, outreach, public involvement, and facilitation” seeks to bridge “the gap between critical projects or decisions, the leaders charged with building or implementing them, and the communities where people live, work, and play.” The firm works on projects that may range from “public involvement as part of regulatory processes,” “proactive communications to build support for a project,” “facilitating a multi-day science advisory board, helping businesses stay open during construction, developing a new website or brand, or gathering input on the future alignment of critical infrastructure...” EnviroIssues has offices in Seattle, Tacoma, Portland, and Oakland.

## **Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Consultants**

Some community engagement consultants have specific expertise in reaching out to and engaging diverse communities, including communities of color and immigrant and refugee communities. They bring knowledge of culturally appropriate engagement strategies and techniques. Local governments that work with this type of consultant can gain valuable insights into how to engage diverse groups respectfully and effectively in their communities. These consultants also may assist local governments in public relations, facilitating culturally appropriate focus groups and community surveys, helping local government agencies to assess their internal cultures and implement diversity, equity, and inclusion goals.

## **MULTICULTURAL COLLABORATIVE**

Anita Yap and her firm Multicultural Collaborative were identified by several people we interviewed as leaders in the field of multicultural consulting for local governments. MCC states that it “brings together a unique multicultural and interdisciplinary team of planning and business professionals. Our distinct MCC approaches help build capacity in institutions and empower communities of color by having a voice in policy and decision-making. We strengthen emerging markets and local economies by helping develop leadership, governance, and self-advocacy.”

Yap’s TEDx Mt Hood Salon presentation, “Creating New Models of Engagement” summarizes MCC’s approach and shares some best practices.<sup>51</sup> Yap asserts that MCC’s “model of change” is to “work with communities to empower them to raise their voices to lead with their strength and their wisdom. And to encourage governments to share the wealth of leadership, decision making and public investment.”

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<sup>51</sup> A link to Anita Yap’s TEDx presentation can be found on the MCC website “Projects” page: <https://mcc-pdx.com/our-projects>

She describes MCC as a team of multi-cultural professionals with “lived experience of racism, oppression, and colonization” that brings to their work “a wide network of social justice leaders, government officials, community-based organizations, and elected officials.” MCC also includes “subject matter experts in affordable housing, public policy, urban design, and transportation.”

In her presentation, Yap shares some best practices MCC has learned from working with diverse communities. These include:

- Show Up: “Go to places you normally don’t go to. Go to a new restaurant that’s somewhere outside your neighborhood that serves some other type of ethnic food.” Attend cultural events in different communities.
- Build Relationships and Trust: “Volunteer in organizations with different events. Better yet, put your money where your intentions are. Donate to a candidate of color that running for office...or many of the nonprofits, such as the Social Justice Fund, that raises money to donate to small, community-based organizations.”
- Learn: “Learn and understand the systems of oppression, the history, and institutional inequities that marginalize not only our communities but also within your organizations.”
- Dismantle: “Learn to dismantle the systems that lead to these inequities.” The best way to start is start with yourself. Or get your house in order. There are many people and resources available that will help you conduct equity assessments, strategic planning and training.”

Examples of MCC Projects include:

- Division-Powell Transportation Plan
- Jade District Vision Planning
- Climate Action Plan Social Equity Guidance and Metrics
- Cully Park Safe Access Project 1: Let Us Build Cully Park!
- City of Canby Transit Master Plan: Public Involvement and Latino-specific Engagement
- EPA Greening the Jade
- City of Tigard, community approved park master plan
- Multnomah County Library: Framework for Future Library Spaces

## **COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT LIAISON SERVICES**

CELS was created in 2014 to provide “language, cultural contextualization and interpretation services for local governments, corporations and private entities” to improve “communication, understanding and civic engagement.” CELs liaisons are community leaders, activists, and respected elders from a wide range of communities of immigrants and people of color “who are fluent in their native language(s) and active in their local community.” CELs liaisons are “passionate about supporting and improving their community’s visibility and welfare.”

The CELS program can help local governments create authentic partnerships to engage underserved communities in culturally appropriate and effective ways. The CELS website reports that the program has liaisons “all over the State of Oregon and Washington, with the majority residing in Multnomah, Washington, Clackamas and Clark counties.” Languages spoken by liaisons include: “Arabic, Farsi, Hindi,

Karen, Nepali, Russian, Ukrainian, Somali, Spanish, Mandarin, Cantonese, Toishanese, Zomi, Burmese, Mon, Vietnamese, Tongan, Chuukese, Cambodian (Khmer), Lao, Thai, Japanese, Korean, Fulani, Wolof, Hausa, Krio, Amharic, Mai Mai, Swahili, Tigringa, Bhutanese, Dari, Uzbek, Pashto, Turkish, Urdu, Armenian, Romanian etc.”

In response to community demand, CELS reports that it now includes liaisons that serve “underserved African American/Black, Native/Indigenous/Tribal, disability and LGBTQ+ communities.”

## **ESPOUSAL STRATEGIES**

Espousal Strategies is a government, community, and public affairs firm that focuses on collaborative problem solving, equity and inclusion, issue lobbying, and coalition building. Johnell Bell is founder and president. The firm’s promotional materials identify the services they provides as: government affairs and legislative advocacy; community engagement and public affairs, diversity, equity, and inclusion, and business development and procurement. The materials state that the firm brings an “ability to work closely with public, community, and other stakeholders from local communities to the nation’s capital.” Espousal Strategy’s community engagement and public affairs services include:

- Developing strategic plans to manage public and political issues and processes;
- Coalition-building, negotiation, and strategies;
- Authentic, effective stakeholder engagement in community and public decision-making processes;
- Siting and permitting projects;
- Constituent and stakeholder relations;
- Civic engagement and education;
- Public outreach;
- Communications, messaging, public and media relations; and
- Group facilitation and process design.
- Espousal Strategies worked with Washington County to help develop its equity policy, and with the City of Portland on its CELs program.”

## **Planning, Engineering, Environmental and Economic Development Consultants**

Some consulting firms have created in-house community engagement teams that can provide community engagement services to local governments as part of larger planning, engineering, environmental, housing, transportation, or economic development projects.

## **COMMUNITAS**

Communitas works with “businesses, residents, developers, non-profits, and government staff” to create community development and redevelopment strategies. Communitas tailors participation to focus on “results and broad inclusion of stakeholders.” The firm uses a range of techniques from “focus groups to developer interviews to community workshops” and works to “involve citizen typically underrepresented in public processes and those who face barriers to traditional formats.” Communitas has been led by Deb Meihoff since she founded the firm in 2006. She also leads the Community Assistance Planning Program (CAPP) of the American Planning Association’s Oregon chapter.

## **MIG**

**MIG** focuses on “community visioning, strategic planning, landscape architecture, and urban planning and design.” MIG says their projects “always involve the community” and “engage and inspire people” through story telling using a variety of techniques. The firm’s design projects seek to create “user-friendly, human centered environments” that create a “sense of place.” MIG incorporates into its projects a focus on “how people think about their place in the world, using an arsenal of digital and grassroots tools to create new social norms for sustainability, environmental justice and environmental stewardship.” MIG describes itself as a “multidisciplinary firm” that allows it to create project-specific teams that can take a project from design through implementation. The firm can draw on staff with skills that range from “urban and policy planners to landscape architects, civil engineers, and storytellers” as well as “biologists, scientists, and environmental compliance experts” to ensure that projects “remain true to the original community vision.” MIG was founded in 1982 and now has offices in California, Colorado, Oregon, Texas, and Washington.

## **DAVID EVANS AND ASSOCIATES**

**DEA** describes itself as “a recognized leader in the design and management of complex transportation, land development, water resources, and energy projects.” DEA brings to its project “the talents of engineers, surveyors, planes, hydrographers, landscape architects, and natural resources scientists.”

DEA’s staff also includes public involvement specialists that opportunities for “those who are affected by a decision...to be involved in the decision-making process” in the projects DEA manages and facilitates. DEA asserts that “[p]ublic involvement is essential to successful projects and today’s public expects convenient opportunities to participate in the process as well as influence the outcome.” DEA public involvement specialists can “provide a positive, strategic, and effective engagement experience” and provide “the public with accurate and clear information tailored to their interest, easy opportunities to participate, and considerate and timely responses to their concerns.” DEA states that they “focus on equitable engagement, recognizing that additional efforts are often necessary to hear from underrepresented groups such as immigrant, low-income, and older adult populations; individuals with limited English language proficiency; or people with disabilities.” DEA designs and implements communication processes that allow “community input to be gathered and used in a meaningful way” and can plan and facilitate “in-person telephone, and online engagement events” using a “multitude of formats and platforms.”

## **Public Relations Consultants**

Some local governments work with public relations firms to assist them in reaching out to and engaging the community and other stakeholders around basic communications, project or policy advocacy, and crisis management. Local governments often use public relations firms to help develop and support bond measure campaigns.

Two public relations firms mentioned by individuals we interviewed include:

## **CFM ADVOCATES**

**CFM** states that its public affairs works is “a full-contact sport” that does not focus on “grass-top outreach or stealth social media campaigns” but rather is grounded in contacting “the people who count— government officials, community leaders, people affected by major projects, news reporters”

and “even opponents” and providing them with “fact-based information,” answering their questions and responding to their concerns. CMF services include: crisis communications, public affairs counsel, media relations, strategic communications, communications audits, and media training.

### **WINNING MARK**

Winning Mark describes the firm as a “full service media firm” that works with clients “every step of the way: from big picture strategy to meticulous execution to real-time optimization.” Areas of work listed include: ballot measures, public engagement, progressive candidates, community mobilization. Services listed include: digital advertising, direct mail and print media, creative strategy and graphic design, communications planning and consulting, email marketing and online fundraising, and website development.

### **Other Types of Consultants**

Other types of consultants also can help local governments build their capacity and effectively engage with their communities through processes like community visioning, strategic planning, and recruitment.

### **STRATEGIC PLANNING – JENSEN STRATEGIES**

Jensen Strategies describes the firm’s work as helping “public, private, and non-profit organizations make key decisions, plan for the future and improve productivity and effectiveness.” The firm’s services include collaborative decision making, organizational development, policy analysis, and recruitment. One example of collaborative decision-making support is Jensen Strategies facilitation of a process for the City of Lebanon to create a community strategic vision action plan based on the City’s 2040 Vision Statement. The process included facilitation of a citizen-led Strategic Vision Action Plan Task Force and a “community/ stakeholder engagement process utilizing multiple outreach tools.” Jensen Strategies also develops and manages recruitment processes for cities and counties who are seeking to hire city managers and fill other senior management positions. These processes often include community input. For instance, in recruiting city managers, Jensen Strategies often seeks input from community members and staff and schedules panel interviews with department managers, community leaders, local public administrators and the City Council.

Jensen Strategies founder and principal, Erik Jensen, has taught classes for the League of Oregon Cities in both community visioning and strategic planning. Jensen shared with our project team that his community visioning class focuses on creating a vision with community input that is community driven and his strategic planning class focuses more inwardly on how elements within a local government interact and work together effectively.

### **APPRECIATIVE ORGANIZING – SHELLY PARINI**

Appreciative Organizing is a powerful and effective strategy that can help local jurisdictions engage their communities in building a shared vision that can lay the foundation for a successful bond measure funding campaign. Shelly Parini shared with our project team that she developed the concept of Appreciative Organizing based on the concepts of Appreciative Inquiry. Parini’s approach to local governance is rooted in a strong focus on listening to and working with the community and building on the strengths of a community versus focusing just on what is wrong with the community.

Parini shared with our project team the experience of Clackamas Community College (CCC) which failed to pass a bond measure using traditional political campaign approaches. After this failure, CCC board members agreed to support Parini in leading an Appreciative Organizing process. Instead of focusing on another bond measure right away, Parini focused instead on engaging community members in a broad discussion of the types of educational services they wanted to see in their community. The process was called, “Imagine Clackamas.” Parini trained CCC board members in the Appreciative Organizing approach. She then engaged community members in helping to develop a broader outreach strategy that engaged community members, students, teachers, and representatives of other local governments in the district.

Through this “discovery campaign” community members learned about CCC and shared their hopes for education in their district and developed a sense of ownership in a vision for the future of CCC. After six months of input, Parini and CCC went back to the community with community’s vision for what it wanted for CCC. Parini shared that by the end of the process community members and local government leaders were strongly behind the vision. When CCC went back out to the community with a new bond measure to implement the community’s vision, it passed.

Parini worked for many years through her consulting firm Parini Connections, helping local jurisdictions and organizations use her Appreciative Organizing model to engage their communities in support of different projects. She currently is employed with Clackamas County Water Environment Services and leads the agency’s strategic communication and engagement. While Parini is not currently offering consulting services, she shared with our project team that she is interested in exploring opportunities to teach a class on Appreciative Organizing and may return to consulting sometime in the future.

More information about Appreciate Organizing and “Imagine Clackamas” can be found in Parini’s article cited in the references of this report.

## Online Tool Providers

Like consultants, these providers are generally private fee-for-service companies. There are many competitors in the field and we endorse none in particular. Below are some examples mentioned by those we interviewed in the course of our research.

### **BANG THE TABLE**

[Bang the Table](#) offers a suite of online community engagement tools known as [Engagement HQ](#). The tools include online forums that support community dialogues, idea boards where residents can post their thoughts and suggestions, interactive community maps, story-telling tools to gather community experiences, a guestbook to collect community comments, a Q&A tool that allows community members to ask questions and get answers, polls to drive interest and assess community sentiments, and surveys to get feedback and quantitative data. The City of Milwaukie has been using Bang the Table since 2020. Granicus [acquired](#) Bang the Table in 2021.

### **METROQUEST**

[MetroQuest](#) offers an online visual survey tool to inform the community and collect input to support urban and transportation planning. Clackamas County has used MetroQuest.

## **ZENCITY**

[Zencity](#) is an online platform that allows local governments to “easily hear from and understand all of their community members’ real-time needs and priorities.” Zencity reports that they use “AI and expert analysts to automatically transform resident feedback into actionable data and tailor-made insights.” Scott Lazenby shared that the [City of Lake Oswego](#) used Zencity for a few years and found it was useful for spot surveys of community opinion on different issues and topics. The city stopped using it after a few years because of cost constraints. Lazenby said that the cities of [Sandy](#) and [Gresham](#) also used Zencity to do spot surveys and snap polls on specific issues and that community members liked using it.

## **GOVDELIVERY**

[Granicus’ govDelivery](#) is a web-based communications management system that allows community members to subscribe to receive local government news and information on topics that interest them.